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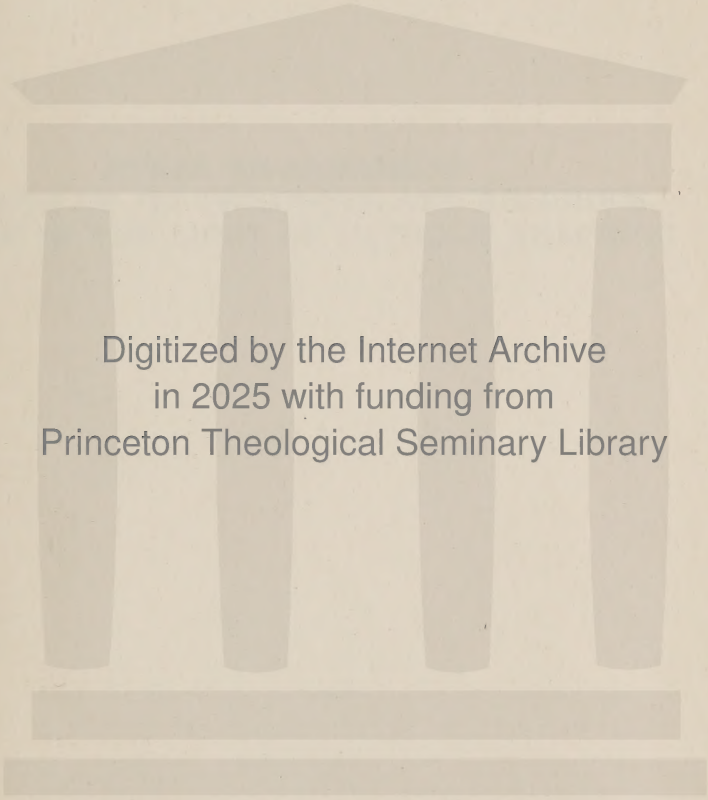
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MORAL RE-ARMAMENT
A STUDY OF ITS TECHNICAL AND RELIGIOUS NATURE IN THE LIGHT OF CATHOLIC TEACHING

The writing of this dissertation was conducted under the direction of Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.Ss.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D., as major professor, and was approved by Rev. Edmond D. Benard, M.A., Ph.D., S.T.D., and Rev. Alfred Rush, C.Ss.R., M.A., S.T.D., as readers.

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A Study of Its Technical and Religious Nature in the Light of Catholic Teaching

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BY

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DEDICATED
TO MY
BELOVED MOTHER

FOREWORD

It is difficult to determine once and for all and with precision the nature of a contemporary movement. There is the disadvantage of viewing its development only up to the present time and of not seeing what course it will take in the future—if, at length, it does take a different course. It must be kept in mind, however, that the contemporary movement known as *Moral Re-Armament* is already based upon certain set principles; and if the development, of which we have spoken, does not include a radical change in these, then the movement, as described in these pages, will remain fundamentally the same.

In order to assure the reader of an accurate treatment, it is necessary to speak briefly of the sources which were used. For the history and development of the movement up to the present, and especially its important American phases, the author found Walter Houston Clark's *The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance* the most authoritative work on the subject, although it contains theological statements unacceptable to Catholics. We might also add that Clark is inaccurate when he seems to conclude that the actions of individual Catholics represent the official attitude of the Catholic Hierarchy or of the Catholic Church itself. *Inside Buchmanism* by Geoffrey Williamson was used for the most part in determining the English historical phases of the movement.

The doctrine and technique of the movement is taken from the speeches of the founder of the organization, from literature written by the leaders of the movement and endorsed and distributed by *Moral Re-Armament* itself. Over a period of five years, from 1954 to 1959, the author made formal requests to the movement for an official statement of the nature and teachings of *Moral Re-Armament.* The requests were always answered with a list of books and the assurance that these contained the teachings of *Moral Re-Armament.*

(1). *Remaking the World* by Frank Buchman, the founder and leader of the movement, the new and revised edition, 1953. This work was still being disseminated by the movement in 1957.* This is, beyond doubt, the most important source of doctrine and practice in *Group* literature.

(2). *Remaking Men* by Paul Campbell and Peter Howard 1954. This book is advertised by the movement as "the *new* MRA book," and "... they (the authors) portray the basic work of the Oxford Group for Moral Re-Armament across the world."

(3). *How Do You Make Up Your Mind?* by H. Kenaston Twitchell, advertised, by *Moral Re-Armament* with other pamphlets by the same author in the following manner: "These pamphlets by H. Kenaston Twitchell give the basic principles of Moral Re-Armament."

(4). *An Idea to Win the World* by Peter Howard, published in October, 1955, along with a pamphlet entitled *Where Do We Go From Here?* are also proposed by the *Group* as giving "the challenging story of the Moral Re-Armament World Mission."

Other books and pamphlets used to determine the nature of the movement were also advertised by the *Group* as touching upon some phase of Group teaching or activity.

The author also made extensive use of Bishop Suenen's excellent treatment of the Movement, *The Right View of Moral Re-Armament,* 1954, as the most complete Catholic critique of the *Group.*

In a number of instances the author quoted from works as cited or quoted in *Moral Re-Armament* publications. The purpose of this was to give the quotation or citation the added authority of being included and approbated in an official *Group* publication. These have to do with the nature and work of the movement.

The religious nature of *Moral Re-Armament* has raised

* A new and revised edition was published in 1958. The texts which the author of this dissertation quoted from the 1953 edition were unchanged.

doubts in the minds of Catholics with reference to the lawfulness of participation in the work of the movement. The sole objective of the author in undertaking this study is to determine whether or not and to what extent a Catholic may take part in *Moral Re-Armament.* It is, therefore, the earnest hope of the author that the present work will serve as a guide to conscience in this matter.

The writer wishes to express his sincere gratitude to the Most Reverend John King Mussio, D.D., J.C.D., Bishop of Steubenville, for the opportunity to undertake graduate studies in Sacred Theology; to the Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.Ss.R., S.T.D., L.L.D., L.H.D., for his scholarly guidance and many kindnesses; and to the other members of the Faculty of the School of Sacred Theology at the Catholic University of America for their profitable instruction and kind assistance.

The author wishes to thank all those publishers, too numerous to mention here, who so graciously gave permission to quote from their publications.

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PART I

THE TECHNICAL NATURE OF THE MOVEMENT

CHAPTER I

PHYSICAL MAKE-UP OF THE MOVEMENT

Every great human activity or movement begins with an idea; but ideas are sterile unless people accept them and act according to them for a certain end. Thus every successful movement includes people working together with a common goal in mind, trained in the use of certain set means to attain it, and pledged permanently to the task. Upon all of this the success or failure of the movement depends. It will be our task in this first chapter to examine the movement called *Moral Re-Armament* under these various aspects.

(A) Origin and Development

The idea of *Moral Re-Armament* began in the mind of Frank Buchman. It was colored by his religious and social background and developed by his own personal experiences and those of others close to him. Our consideration of the movement, then, begins with this man.

1. PRELUDE TO A MOVEMENT

On a small sailing ship called the *Phoenix*,[1] in the year 1740, the ancestors of Frank Nathan Daniel Buchman set sail for America.[2] Victims of religious persecution—they were German Pietists[3]—they had left behind them their home and homeland in Saint-Gall, Switzerland[4] to emigrate to a small town in western Pennsylvania called Pennsburg,

[1] See Geoffrey Williamson, *Inside Buchmanism* (London: Watts and Co., 1954), p. 196.

[2] See Peter Howard, *The World Rebuilt* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1951), p. 150.

[3] See Walter Houston Clark, *The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1951), p. 120.

[4] See John McCook Roots, "MRA: Will It Master Communism?" *Look*, XV (July-Dec., 1951), 108.

where they lived the simple and obscure life of agricultural settlers.[5] It was into this environment that a son was born to Frank and Sarah (Greenwalt) Buchman on June 4, 1878[6] —a son who was to have a somewhat extensive religious influence, much like his famous ancestor, Bibliander, who succeeded Zwingli in the chair of theology at Zurich University and translated the Koran into German.[7] When Frank Buchman was fifteen years of age, the family moved to Allentown, Pennsylvania, where his parents were known as being ethically upright. The character of the boy was formed in an atmosphere of rigid self-discipline tempered with a gentle humor. His understanding of human nature he most probably received from his father, who was a business man. And because of the religious views of his parents, the lad was imbued with a theology both conservative and pietistic, ". . . which would explain his sense of personal contact with God, his ideas of innate evil in man, and his belief in regeneration."[8]

He attended high school in Allentown and college at Muhlenberg where he received his bachelor's degree[9] in 1899.[10] In the same year he entered the Philadelphia Seminary at Mt. Airy, a Lutheran theological school.[11] He received his master's degree[12] when he graduated from that Seminary in 1902, and later an honorary degree of doctor of divinity from Muhlenberg.[13] As a graduate student he studied abroad at Westminster College, Cambridge (Presbyterian) and at Inner Mission, Germany.[14] After his return to America, he was made pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran parish at Over-

[5] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] See Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
[8] Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[9] See R. H. Murray, *Group Movements Throughout the Ages* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1935), p. 304.
[10] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] See Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 304.
[13] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
[14] *Ibid.*

brook, Pennsylvania.[15] In 1905 he resigned his pastorship[16] to establish a hospice for homeless boys in Philadelphia.[17] A disagreement with the trustees of the institution over the management of money ended his connection with it in 1908. The trustees "... wished to balance the budget, while Buchman wanted to feed the hungry."[18] Because of ill health resulting from overwork and the feeling of frustration and resentment at the hands of the directors of the hospice, he embarked for England and attended the Keswick Conference held there in June.[19] While listening to a sermon on the cross given by a woman[20] in a tiny church in Cumberland,[21] he claims to have had a vision of the crucified Christ.[22] This experience had a profound influence on the spiritual development of the mind and life of Buchman. He immediately wrote letters of apology to the trustees,[23] and his story of the vision and conversion at tea that afternoon led to the conversion of the son of the family with whom he was staying.[24] It seems that this was the birth of the movement, for

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] See Donald Hayne, "The Oxford Group," *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, XCIX (1938), 2 (hereafter cited as A.E.R.).

[17] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39. Cf. Paul Campbell and Peter Howard, *Remaking Men* (New York: Arrowhead Books Inc., 1954), p. 90: "He [Buchman] felt his plans and his idealism had been smashed by the selfishness of those six directors. He felt so frustrated that he became ill."

[19] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 39. The Keswick convention is an annual interdenominational conference held in northern England, at Keswick.

[20] *Ibid.* [21] See Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

[22] Cf. A. J. Russell, *For Sinners Only* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1932), p. 58, quoted in Frank Buchman, *Remaking the World* (London: Blandford Press, 1953), p. 222: " 'The woman's simple talk personalised the Cross for me that day, and suddenly I had a poignant vision of the Crucified.' "

[23] Cf. Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 185: "I saw the resentments I had against six men standing out like tombstones in my heart. I asked God to change me, and He told me to put things right with those six men. I obeyed God, and wrote six letters of apology."

[24] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

in describing this experience later he says that he received a commission at that time to spread this "answer" to men and nations.[25]

A few months after this episode, in 1908, he sought and secured a position as student YMCA secretary at Penn State College, having returned to America in the meantime. He held this position from January 1 to July 1, 1909,[26] and "... there was heightened religious activity and interest during Buchman's tenure."[27] It is here that he gathered his first followers.[28] In order to finance the various religious activities which he organized—he was a genius at organizing and arranging the many details which campaigns and conferences entailed—he succeeded in bringing his work to the notice of those who could support it.[29]

In 1915 he resigned his work at Penn State and spent a year teaching and evangelizing in India, Korea, and Japan[30] as Extension Lecturer in Personal Evangelism[31] from Hartford Seminary, a position which he held as long as he was associated with that seminary. It was at Hartford that he also conducted classes in Personal Evangelism.[32] According to a former student, it seems that in class he laid emphasis on mysticism and propounded his conviction that the world needed a spiritual revolution. He upheld fundamentalist views and made frequent use of the Bible which he seems to have interpreted literally. But it was quite clear that he subordinated all his religious views to his evangelistic aim.[33]

He did not propound his religious ideas at Hartford without opposition, especially from the faculty whom, it seems,

[25] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
[26] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[28] See Peter Whitestone, O.P., "Groups," *The Blackfriars*, XVIII (1937), 661.
[29] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 47.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

he had criticized for not making their courses "vital." The criticism Buchman received in return ridiculed his lack of scholarship.[34] Other disagreements cropped up, and Buchman summarily resigned his position.[35]

It would seem, however, that the main reason why Buchman withdrew from the seminary was his conviction that he had been chosen to launch a movement of great spiritual revival. Practical experience in making converts in England and the Far East; the development of methods of personal contact at Penn State University and Hartford in influencing moral change in students; plus the fact that he had interested wealthy people in the work he had been doing contributed in prompting him to give his whole time to world revival. Thus at the end of his career at Hartford, Buchman had fairly well determined his technique for bringing about the moral betterment of the world.[36]

As Extension Lecturer in Personal Evangelism during his Hartford stay, Buchman had done missionary work in China in 1918.[37] Friends he had made there gave him contacts in Oxford and Cambridge; and he later visited these universities during the Summer of 1921, before he resigned from Hartford.[38] When he met with little success at Cambridge he set out for Oxford during the course of the summer with three disciples he had gained at Cambridge.[39] Here he began to train his followers in Buchmanite practices[40] and attracted attention by his numerous conversions.[41] At this time the incipient movement to which Buchman was devoting only part of his time was generally known as *Buchmanism,* and later (1927) as *A First Century Christian Fellowship.*[42]

[34] *Ibid.,* p. 49.
[35] *Ibid.,* pp. 50-51.
[36] *Ibid.,* pp. 50-52.
[37] *Ibid.,* p. 53.
[38] *Ibid.,* p. 54.
[39] See Whitestone, *op. cit.,* p. 661.
[40] See Rt. Rev. Msgr. Suenens, *The Right View of Moral Re-Armament* (London: Burns and Oates, 1954), p. 3.
[41] See Clark, *op. cit.,* pp. 54-55.
[42] *Ibid.,* p. 35.

The incident that ended Buchman's association with Hartford took place towards the end of 1921. In December of that year he was invited by a military member of the British delegation to meet delegates in the World Disarmament Conference in Washington, D.C.[43] It was during this trip, according to Dr. Clark, that "... psychologically speaking, was born the Oxford Group."[44] Buchman had been torn between the decision to continue his activities at Hartford or to devote himself entirely to world revival.[45] His decision was in favor of the latter.[46] From this time on he was to carry out his decision through various stages of failure, grave illness, and spasmodic success.

Up to this point the genesis of the principles and techniques of the movement had been developing in the mind of its founder, and the conviction of what must be done had been present in his thoughts ever since the experience of Keswick.[47] But it was the decision to put these principles, technique and conviction into practice wholeheartedly for world revival that was the real birth of the movement.[48]

2. THE BEGINNINGS OF MRA

Not long after his decision to set out upon world revival, Buchman resigned his post and for the next six years did personal evangelistic work in various American colleges and universities and also at Oxford with varying success.[49] In 1926 the famous Princeton episode took place about which much controversy has arisen.[50] It seems that the most important factor involved in the expulsion of the *Group* from this campus was its attitude toward sex, as expressed in

[43] See Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
[44] Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[46] See Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 151.
[47] See Hayne, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[48] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 53-56. See also Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 223.
[50] See Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-74.

public confession of the intimate details of sexual sin.[51] It would be beyond the scope of this history to go into detail upon this subject further than to give what seems to be Clark's studied opinion that the criticism was probably justifiable although to some extent exaggerated.[52]

The *Group* thus suffered its first setback. The accusations of both faculty and students at Princeton in the fall of 1926 terminated the influence of Buchman's revival in the American colleges. There seems to be no doubt that at this time the movement was seriously on the decline in America. From then on England became the center of the activities of the *Group*.[53]

However, Buchman's decision to promote world revival would indicate that his work during this period (1921-1926) was not limited to America. The fact that the movement was so akin to American evangelistic theories and that Buchman was a native son explains to a great extent why he emphasized American conversion. Some seemed to think that he devoted the greater part of his time to university students in order to establish a leadership to disseminate his ideas to the world.[54] But, be that as it may, missionary work had already been carried on in a number of countries. We have already mentioned that Buchman was in England in 1921.[55] In 1923, India and Australia were evangelized. In 1927, Holland was visited, and South Africa in 1928.[56] Buchman had already enkindled the fire of world revolution in religion.

After the Princeton episode, Buchman went to Oxford where the movement had prospered. Needless to say, Buchman's arrival enhanced its prospects.[57] His peculiar talent for interesting public figures in the movement was success-

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[54] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
[55] Supra, p. 7.
[56] See Whitestone, *op. cit.*, p. 661.
[57] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

fully employed in attracting the attention of a number of socially prominent figures;[58] and his experience with opposition stood him in good stead when he was attacked again as at Princeton. He simply eliminated the cause of the contention, forbade the public confession of sexual sins,[59] whereas private revelations (one person to another) of such sinful matters continued.[60] This was the beginning of the practice of the *Group* of eliminating opposition and criticism by actually or apparently removing their cause or causes.[61]

Oxford now became the center of activity for the movement. Here Buchman established an " 'inner group' . . . made up of a small number of tried and trusted leaders."[62] It was from this university that missionaries visited South Africa in 1929 to spread the "message."[63] This visit was important for the history of the movement because it was here christened the *Oxford Group* by the South African newspaper, *Cape Times*.[64] The name was immediately popular among members of the movement who adopted it, perhaps, because of the prestige which it indicated, although the *Group* was quick to deny that it had any official connection with Oxford University.[65] But, as we shall see later in this chapter, the change of name did not mean a change in the nature of the movement.[66]

That the movement was again on the upsurge is testified

[58] *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[60] Infra, p. 28.

[61] Infra, p. 11. Cf. Suenens, *The Right View of Moral Re-Armament* (London: Burns and Oates, 1954), p. 86. This is especially apparent when the *Group* is accused of being a religious movement.

[62] Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[64] See Roots, *op. cit.*, p. 108. Williamson suggests another version in *op. cit.*, p. 145.

[65] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 4. During talks with leaders of the organization, the author was assured that the *Group* had no official connection with Oxford University except that some of its adherents were Oxford students.

[66] Infra, pp. 13-17.

to by the ever-increasing number of people present at gatherings and "houseparties." From 1930 to 1935 the number of those present at these meetings rose from seven hundred to ten thousand.[67] During this time missionary zeal carried members to countries on five continents with many repeat visits.[68] The *Group* held meetings at Geneva while the League of Nations was in session in 1933 and at the British Industries Fair in Birmingham, England.[69] This orientation into the political and industrial field has been characteristic of the movement ever since.

An event of interest occurred on October 7, 1933, in St. Paul's Cathedral, London. It was the intention of Buchman to inaugurate a religious revival along *Group* lines in that city. It is not apparent what course of events brought it about, but it seems that Buchman and his followers were commissioned in a public commissioning service by Winnington Ingram, Bishop of London, to carry out this conversion.[70] A similar incident occurred during the following year when Buchman and one hundred members were commissioned for evangelistic work in London by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace.[71] Such a mode of action would seem to admit of varied conclusions, but the least one could conclude is that it was extremely peculiar for one who very clearly had disassociated himself from any organized religious body to associate himself thus with the Established Church of England.[72] Perhaps it is merely another instance of apparently reversing themselves which the Buchman followers seem to use when advantage warrants it.

It was about this time (1938) that the *Group* adopted the methods of modern advertising to promote the movement, in its use of endorsement by prominent public figures

[67] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
[68] See Whitestone, *op. cit.*, p. 661. See also Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
[69] See Whitestone, *op. cit.*, p. 661.
[70] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
[71] *Ibid.*
[72] *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

and in its use of slogans.[73] The term "moral re-armament" itself began in the *Group* as a slogan before it was adopted as its name.[74] Buchman's name, too, began to become prominent in *Group* propaganda. This was a peculiar event in view of the thinking and desires of Buchman in 1921 when he "... considered privacy essential to his method, and insisted that only his initials must be used if any reference was made to his work."[75]

In 1938, Buchman was "guided" to launch the movement under a new name, *Moral Re-Armament*.[76] The change of name is indicative of the events of the time rather than any modification of the nature of the movement itself. Preparation for the second World War was the event. If we could go back in memory to the time of the pre-war era in 1938 and could realize vividly the state of fear brought on by the ominous shadows of war, we would understand better the state of mind which conjured up this new trend in the movement, to save the tottering civilization of Europe by instituting what was called a new ideological factor in life.[77] It was upon this fear and the popular trend to re-arming, with which *Moral Re-Armament* is intentionally analogous, that the movement under its new title was begun.[78] And thus at a reception given in his honor, on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, in East Ham Town Hall, London, he initiated *Moral Re-Armament*,[79] a name the movement has retained up to the present time.

The reader, delving for the first time into this movement, might, perhaps, be perplexed at the confusion of names under which it has been designated. And with good reason! It would seem that there is not one movement here but sev-

[73] For an example of this technique see "For All Men Everywhere," *The New World News*, No. 9 (Autumn, 1954), 1-39.
[74] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
[75] Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
[76] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[77] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[78] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
[79] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

eral, each distinct from the other. And such is true! *Moral Re-Armament,* or as it is more popularly known, MRA, is a parasite movement. It cannot exist as a great movement unless it attaches itself to some evolving calamity of the present time simply because it seeks a temporal security, teaches a temporal messianism, and plays upon man's desire for peace and happiness in this life.[80] Thus different titles designate distinct orientations, distinct public catastrophes, to which it pronounces it has the *only* solution.[81] As *A First Century Christian Fellowship,* to uplift morals and to revitalize the churches seems to have been its primary goal,[82] an aim which is still, but only secondarily, proposed.[83] As the *Oxford Group,* or more simply the *Group,* it applied its principles more specifically to politics and to the problems of industry.[84] Under the name *Moral Re-Armament* there have been more or less three distinct orientations: before World War II it was organized as a mechanism against war;[85] during the war it strove to inculcate patriotism, especially in America;[86] after the war it set itself up as the solution to the materialism of the left [Communism] and the materialism of the right [atheism].[87] It has also been known, at various times, as *Buchmanism,*[88] *Group Movement,* and *Oxford Movement.* [89]

It must be pointed out, however, that these titles do not signify adequate distinctions in the sense that there is no

[80] Infra, pp. 76-79.

[81] See Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 147.

[82] See *The Times* (New York), April 23, 1932, p. 7.

[83] See Maisie Ward, *The Oxford Group* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1937), p. 14.

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] See Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 62.

[86] See Williamson, *op. cit.,* p. 209.

[87] See Peter Howard, "World History Can Be Changed," *Indian Finance, MRA Supplement,* (May 1954), 3.

[88] See Ronald A. Knox, "Fear, Conscience, and Deliverance," *The Clergy Review,* XIV (1938), 310.

[89] See Edward J. Mahoney, "Moral Re-Armament—Lawfulness For Catholics," *The Clergy Review,* XXXVII (1952), 157.

overlapping of intentions, especially between *Moral Re-armament* and the *Oxford Group*. Both of these stress the application of principles for the solution of social problems, while *A First Century Christian Fellowship* stressed rather the application of principles for the solution of individual difficulties. But irrespective of what name one uses to designate the movement, it is extremely important for an understanding of MRA to realize that the principles are the same.[90] Authors seem to be in agreement that the nature of the movement has not been fundamentally altered by changes of name, and there is apparently no evidence to the contrary.[91]

The history of the use of the various designations given to the movement would also tend to substantiate a fundamental sameness in nature. That is to say, some reason other than a radical change in the principles of the movement influenced the alteration in terminology. When the movement began to use the methods of modern publicity, it certainly saw the advantage of a change of name to something more attractive and succinct than *A First Century Christian Fellowship*, something that would, perhaps, in the line of its use of advertising, give the movement an endorsed dignity. The title *Oxford Group* came to be applied to the movement wholly by chance, as we have related; but the leaders would surely be quick to perceive the advantage of being even nominally connected with Oxford. Let us put it this way: it certainly did the movement no harm to be associated seemingly with the great English university.[92] *Moral Re-Armament* itself began within the movement as

[90] Infra, Chap. II.

[91] Cf. Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 4: "Although MRA enlarged the sphere of action of the Oxford Group, it is important to note that, as far as the underlying impulse is concerned, there was no break between the two phases, as indeed Frank Buchman confirmed when I questioned him on this point. There was the same background, the same homogeneous development, the same 'message.'" Cf. also Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 168. Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 14. Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[92] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

a slogan, another result of advertising methods: ". . . suppose every individual had the moral re-armament of God-control."[93] In another place, Buchman says, "The nations must re-arm morally."[94] And again: "It [the *Oxford Group*] has been in action . . . training men for the moral re-armament of the nations."[95]

If the *Oxford Group* has been training men, it has been doing this according to its own principles. And if it has been training them for "the moral re-armament of the nations," it means that it has been training them to act according to the principles it has taught them, that is, to use the moral re-armament which the *Oxford Group* through its teachings has given them, and to influence others so to act. This, in effect, is what constitutes the manner and method of the moral re-armament of nations. Thus the principles of the *Oxford Group* and *Moral Re-Armament,* which is the nominative form of the use of the principles of the *Group* for re-arming nations, are fundamentally one and the same. The only distinction we may have then between these two movements is modal in nature. It is the distinction consisting in a diverse terminology, in a different usage, in a distinct orientation demanding a distinct application of principles. What was previously employed primarily to perfect the individual and through him the church (*A First Century Christian Fellowship*) was later applied to social problems (*The Oxford Group*) and is now being more specifically applied as a defense against Communism and atheism (*Moral Re-Armament*).

Another reason for believing that the change in name did not mean a change in basic principles is evident from their interchangeableness. The following reports were taken from the *New York Times*:

> April 20, 1932:
> The organization is called "A First Century Christian Fellowship" and its nickname is "Buchman-

[93] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
[94] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[95] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

ism." Its chief exponent is the Rev. Frank N. D. Buchman.[96]

April 25, 1932:
Return to the tenets of early Christianity . . . was stressed today . . . at the "houseparty" of the First Century Christian Fellowship. . . . H. Kenaston Twitchell . . . [is] . . . connected with the Oxford Group.[97]

May 10, 1932:
About 600 persons attended the first meeting . . . of the Oxford Group last evening. . . . This is the religious movement founded by the Rev. Frank N. D. Buchman, which is more generally known on this side of the Atlantic as "A First Century Christian Fellowship."[98]

Even as late as 1932 Buchman himself still spoke of the movement as a fellowship:

April 26, 1932:
Regarding the fellowship and its interpretations he [Buchman] said: "Do anything that God lets you; that is liberty; but be sure God lets you. The fellowship will never tell you what to do."[99]

The year 1933 marks the end of the use of both names to indicate the same movement:

January 3, 1933:
Bishop William F. Manning gave his Episcopal approval to the First Century Christian Movement, the followers of which call themselves the Oxford Group.[100]

Enough has been said to show that the change of name from the *First Century Christian Fellowship* to the *Oxford Group* did not mean a change of movement.

[96] *The Times* (New York), April 20, 1932, p. 18.
[97] *Ibid.*, April 25, 1932, p. 10. It seems here that the Oxford Group was merely one of the groups of the movement.
[98] *Ibid.*, May 10, 1932, p. 2.
[99] *Ibid.*, April 26, 1932, p. 22.
[100] *Ibid.*, January 3, 1933, p. 2.

The same is true with regard to the *Oxford Group* and *Moral Re-Armament.* For example, in *The Times* for September 6, 1938, it was reported: "... speakers of the Oxford Group World Assembly here today centered their attention on the need of 'moral re-armament.' "[101] The movement was incorporated in England under the name the *Oxford Group* and is still known there under that title.[102] However, a book was published under the auspices of the *Group* in Great Britain during 1952 entitled *The Oxford Group and Its Work of Moral Re-Armament.*[103]

In September, 1938, the *First World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament* was held at Interlaken, Switzerland.[104] There were about 2,000 in attendance with "... delegates from forty countries."[105] From then on the use of modern promotion practices began on a mass scale with great international assemblies. The *Second World Assembly* was conducted in the Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles.[106] Buchman had returned to America in the Spring of 1939 to launch MRA here. He toured the country with a band of 130 workers.[107] His proselytizing must have been successful because there were 30,000 present at the Assembly, and it is reported that another 10,000 were turned away.[108] Buchman remained in the United States from 1939 to 1946, traveling and giving speeches in various parts of the country.[109]

Nevertheless, "... during the years of the second World War (1939-45) Buchmanism was in eclipse."[110] Three factors combined to influence this decline: (1) The defec-

[101] *Ibid.*, Sept. 6, 1938, p. 21.
[102] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
[103] See *The Oxford Group and Its Work of Moral Re-Armament* (London: Lowe and Brydone Ltd., 1954).
[104] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
[105] *Ibid.*
[106] *Ibid.*
[107] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
[108] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
[109] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-224.
[110] "Moral Re-Armament," *The Social Justice Review,* XLV (1952), 243.

tion of a number of members, including some leaders who felt that the movement had abandoned its emphasis on primitive Christianity by its employment of mass convert methods and was on the point of becoming another religious body.[111] With the spontaneous growth of the organization there also arose a need for certain members to take on administrative functions. It, therefore, became increasingly necessary that there be established a central committee for carrying on this world-wide mission.[112] Thus a tendency towards institutionalism arose in the *Group,* ". . . which has long boasted that it is not an organization,"[113] and became an alarming factor in the eyes of some of its members. (2) Moreover, much bad publicity was given the movement in England and America because of attempts to obtain draft deferments for its full-time workers.[114] (3) It was also during this period that the founder and leader of the *Group* became seriously ill.[115] MRA, however, was not dead. It was soon to raise again its challenging questions and receive, perhaps, its most promising answer.

After the war had ended, MRA launched a program in London to win the peace,[116] in an attempt, it would seem, to renew its own vigor. Materialism now became the object of attack, the materialism of the West, which expressed itself in unethical practices between classes and nations; and the materialism of the East under the name of Communism.[117] Thus, MRA, set itself up as the solution to all the

[111] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 80. Cf. Buchman, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-67. Buchman makes some interesting remarks about this in his book: "Does it say 'publish' there? There is publicity. It is amazing how many Christian people and otherwise clever people are put off by a thing like this. You mustn't get publicity when you want to build something! All the publicity must be for destruction—or must it?"

[112] See *The Oxford Group and Its Work of Moral Re-Armament* (London: Lowe and Brydone Ltd., 1954), p. 15.

[113] Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

[114] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[116] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

[117] Supra, p. 15.

social problems on the basis of its own principles: labor and management problems, class problems, political problems, economic problems. World assemblies were held annually at Caux, Switzerland, from 1946 to 1950.[118] In 1946, approximately 2,000 people from about a score or more of nations were in attendance, numbered among whom were several parliamentarians, the Chief of the General Staff of Denmark, heads of industry, trade unionists, Catholics and Protestants, leaders of the Resistance, and coal miners from Britain.[119] MRA was again on the upsurge. In 1948, there were teams at work in Germany.[120] World assemblies were held at Mackinac Island, Michigan, in 1951 and 1954. There seems to be no evidence that there was a world assembly in 1952. Perhaps the national assembly in London was held in its place during that year. The year 1953 marked a return to Caux for the world assembly.[121] Another gathering of this type occurred during January, 1955, in Washington, D.C., at some sessions of which this author was present.[122] World assemblies have been the custom each year up to the present time.

If the number in attendance at these gatherings means anything, then MRA is again on the decline. The World Assembly at Mackinac Island in 1954 drew 1,029 delegates from forty-two nations,[123] whereas in the Washington Assembly in 1955 there were only 700 delegates from twenty-three nations.[124] Certainly MRA has suffered a defeat in the labor field, especially in America.[125]

We might also mention an important occurrence in the

[118] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

[119] See Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

[120] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 224.

[122] The author also had the pleasure of talking with a number of leaders and members at various other times.

[123] See "World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament, a Summary Report," (September 25-October 5, 1954), p. 1. (In mimeographed form only.)

[124] See *The Star* (Washington), Dec. 31, 1954, p. 2.

[125] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

Church of England Assembly during the year 1955. The Social and Industrial Council of this Assembly had taken up the study of *Moral Re-Armament*[126] as early as May, 1953; and on January 11, 1955, a report was finished and submitted to the Assembly of the Church of England for its decision.[127] About the twentieth of February, it came up before that Assembly for judgment.[128] There seems to have been a great deal of influence exerted upon the members of this body by MRA to reject the unfavorable report.[129] A debate ensued which lasted a considerable time until the Archbishop of York arose to denounce the "... 'concentrated pressure' ..." which he had experienced from associates of the movement.[130] His statement did much to help defeat a measure to send the report back to the Council. However, although the assembly did receive the report, it made no "... 'judgment upon the merits or upon the demerits of this movement.' "[131] Thus the "... Report has only the authority of the Council by whom it was prepared."[132] But despite this limited authorization, the study itself will probably have a telling effect upon the fortunes of the movement, if for no other reason than that these objections will never be adequately answered by the *Group* because of its disdain for polemics.

In August, 1958, the Most Reverend Thomas L. Noa, Bishop of Marquette, Michigan, in whose territory Mackinac Island, American center of MRA, is located, issued a directive on Catholic participation in *Moral Re-Armament.* The instruction concludes that, because of the danger to the purity and integrity of faith, "... within the limits of the

[126] See *Moral Re-Armament, A Study of the Movement Prepared by the Social and Industrial Council of the Church Assembly* (Church Information Board of the Church Assembly, Church House, Westminster, S.W. 1, 1955).

[127] *Ibid.*, p. 3. (In the Foreword).

[128] See *Time* (Magazine), *LXV* (Jan.-March, 1955), 34.

[129] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-36.

[130] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[131] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[132] *Moral Re-Armament, A Study, op. cit.*, p. 2.

jurisdiction of the Diocese of Marquette . . . [Catholics] . . . may not attend the meetings of MRA or participate in or promote its activities."[133] This is a telling blow to the fortunes of the movement among Catholics in the United States. A yet more serious blow came to the movement everywhere with the death of Frank Buchman on August 7, 1961.

But be that as it may, MRA has accomplished in its own way a great deal of good. How it did accomplish it and what it accomplished will be taken up in the succeeding sections of this chapter.

(B) MRA Indoctrination

Everything that is now the *Group's* came to it through the mind and as a result of the thinking of Buchman.[134] Whether it concerns beliefs or technique, the mind of Buchman has been determinatively predominant ". . . for it is *his* movement."[135] This is especially true during its earlier days. And such is not surprising; the leader of any organization, and particularly a religious one as prophetic in nature as MRA,[136] is oftentimes held in such repute that not only the fundamental principles but also further developments are humbly placed under his authoritative judgment. If everyone may receive "divine guidance," then Buchman is held by the *Group* to be the prophet *par excellence.* Thus it would seem that Buchman's "divine guidance" has final authority in all things.[137] But Buchman's principles would not only be supreme by reason of his control over the *Group;* they would also be secure because he has trained leaders to carry on his work.[138] Accordingly, the study of Buchman's own

[133] Most Rev. Thomas L. Noa, D.D., *Pastoral Instruction on Faith With a Directive on Catholic Participation in Moral Re-Armament* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Press, 1958), p. 26.

[134] See Clark, *op. cit.,* p. 98. See also Infra.

[135] Henry Van Dusen, "Oxford Group Movement," *The Atlantic Monthly,* CLIV (1934), 1-16.

[136] Infra, p. 43.

[137] See Suenens, *op. cit.,* pp. 67-68.

[138] See Peter Howard, *The World Rebuilt* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1951), pp. 155-156.

religious mentality, his experience of conversion and his genius for detail with a keen knowledge of handling people must be taken into consideration. In this section we will treat of these points only insofar as they influence the *Group's* convert technique.

The basic spiritual temperament of Buchman, as already mentioned,[139] was nurtured in conservative German Lutheranism,[140] pietistic in tendency.[141] The features of this Lutheran pietism which concern us here are the following: the emphasis on gatherings at which the Bible was read and good example exhorted, as compared with the *Group's* predilection for study of the Bible and mass gatherings, especially the latter, as a means of propagating the movement;[142] the principle of the universal priesthood according to which individuals were to serve as spiritual directors to one another in instructing, reproving and exhorting, which parallels the *Group* practice of using lay members as "soul-surgeons" and missionaries.[143]

The aims of the Keswick Conference also probably served to influence Buchman's mind in convert technique. At least there is a surprising similarity between the principles of this version of protestant evangelism and MRA.[144] Those points which interest us here are the alleged non-sectarian and non-organizational character of the Conference.[145] It is almost impossible to pick up any MRA publication without stumbling across the statement that the movement is neither a sect nor an organization, a fact which has made the *Group* attractive to a great many people of diverse and contradictory creeds.

Perhaps the greatest influence upon Buchman's religious

[139] Supra, p. 4.

[140] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

[141] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[142] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

[143] See Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119. See also Paul Campbell and Peter Howard, *Remaking Men* (New York: Arrowhead Books, Inc., 1954), pp. 58-68.

[144] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 121. [145] *Ibid.*

thought was what has been called American Collegiate evangelism as found in the student YMCA,[146] of which Buchman, as we have mentioned, was secretary until 1909[147] and with which he was associated until 1922.[148] The religious nature of this movement owes much to Dwight L. Moody who also indirectly had a great influence upon Buchman through Henry Drummond of Edinburgh University and Henry B. Wright of Yale.[149]

From the YMCA movement Buchman garnered many of the ideas which he employed in conducting "house-parties." It was his duty as secretary of this religious group to promote intercampus visits which consisted in campaigns and conferences—something like a Catholic retreat—where delegates and religious leaders discussed public and private spiritual problems. A personal evangelistic method was employed in which all were exhorted to give themselves entirely to Christ, much the same as MRA does. Buchman, however, was dissatisfied with the shallow manner of approach to individuals and, in constructing his own "house-parties," his method of evangelizing became more detailed and was carried out on a more intimately friendly basis.[150]

From the writings of Drummond and the influence of Wright, Buchman obtained almost all of his ideas concerning the type of personal evangelism he employs.[151] The adjective *personal* here is to be taken both in an active and a passive sense. It denotes one person evangelizing and one person evangelized. As a technique, it means individual working on individual for the purpose of conversion; and the basis of rapport is friendship.[152] One need only meet one member of MRA to be convinced of the importance with

[146] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[147] Supra, p. 6.
[148] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
[149] *Ibid.*
[150] *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124. See also Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.
[151] Infra, pp. 101 ff.
[152] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

which friendship is held in the Group convert technique. But friendship is only the remote means to conversion. Within the framework of amicable relations the experienced missionary must make a diagnosis of the spiritual state of his friend and suggest a method of improving.[153] The need for such was brought forceably to the attention of Buchman in the writings of Drummond; and Buchman himself set out to develop a science of spirituality for this very purpose.[154] In developing this study, Buchman leaned very heavily upon the ideas of Henry B. Wright. These ideas were the following: (1) God has a plan for each individual and obliges him to submit to it. (2) The "Four Moral Standards" are the essence and the measure of Christian living. (3) Confession, even in intimate details if necessary, is to be solicited. (4) The Doctrines of "Restitution," "Quiet Time," and "Guidance" are proposed. (5) Personal evangelism must be cultivated with friendship as the basis.[155]

Buchman presented his formula for the work of evangelizing to a fellow passenger from China in 1918, called the "Five C's": Confidence, Conviction, Confession, Conversion, and Continuance,[156] the nature of which corresponds to what is now called the "Five D's," to be treated later in this section.

It is not a unique thing for a man to systematize the experience of his own conversion for the profit of others, and Buchman is no exception. The fact of the matter is that he himself publicly told of his "changed" life in a radio broadcast from San Francisco on June 4, 1948:

> Let me tell you how it came to me. Just forty years ago I was divided. Materialism was winning its battle in my heart.... One day, in England, God showed me the cost of my pride and my materialism. I admitted it. That is the first step. Get honest. I said, "Sorry"—first to God than to those I

[153] *Ibid.*, pp. 58-68.
[154] Infra, p. 117.
[155] See Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.
[156] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

> had wronged. That is the second step. I learned to listen to God. I accepted His commission to bring an answer to men and nations. That is the third step.[157].

Certainly the steps of conversion of which Buchman speaks were already known to him before this occurrence in England; else how could we explain the form which he says it did take. But they were known to him only in theory as an evangelistic technique. For him, the testing ground for the evaluation of these principles was the application of them to his own life. Buchman's experience at Keswick gave him that assurance of knowledge which successful practice alone can give. He left the Conference a "changed" man with the personal knowledge of the problems an individual may have in accepting and continuing "conversion."

Perhaps the most important single factor that Buchman's conversion convinced him of was the necessity of an "experience of the Cross" as he is wont to call it.[158] There is a more detailed account of Buchman's conversion quoted in *For Sinners Only* which we must cite here in order to explain how the conversion of Buchman gave rise to this conviction in him. Remember, Buchman is in a tiny Church in England listening to a woman preaching:

> "The woman speaker spoke about the Cross of Christ, of the sinner and the One who had made full satisfaction for the sins of the world. 'A doctrine which I knew as a boy,' says Frank.... 'The woman's simple talk personalised the Cross for me that day, and suddenly I had a poignant vision of the Crucified. With this deeper experience of how the love of God in Christ had bridged the chasm dividing me from Him, and the new sense of buoyant life that had come, I returned to the house....' "[159]

[157] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

[158] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

[159] A. J. Russell, *For Sinners Only* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), pp. 57-58 as quoted in Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

All through his speeches Buchman makes reference to this experience. It is variously spoken of: "... a living experience of Christ";[160] "... the Cross of Christ will transform the world";[161] and "An experience of the Cross made me a new type of revolutionary."[162]

It is this kind of experience that Buchman wants his followers to have, an experience of the "... saving power of Jesus Christ":[163]

> Now, how can we find this new quality of living? It can only come from a genuine religious experience—that is valid for a change of heart.... It is valid because it originates in God, and issues in actual changes in human nature.[164]
>
> This change begins with a change in human nature through Jesus Christ.[165]
>
> "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." That is the discovery everyone is looking for. That is the answer.[166]

In order to understand Buchman's influence it is also necessary to point out how his native talents determined *Group* technique. Perhaps his greatest gift is his genius for detail[167] and his ability to handle people.[168] Anyone who has ever attended an MRA gathering has been amazed at the precise manner in which activities are arranged and carried out. Much of the success of the early "houseparties" was due to this sense of exactness.[169] Such orderliness could not but have a strong attraction to those in attendance. If we were to add to this natural bent for order Buchman's

[160] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[161] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[162] *Ibid.*, p. 110.
[163] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[164] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[165] I*bid.*, p. 78.
[166] *Ibid.*, p. 192.
[167] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
[168] See Alan Thornhill, *The Significance of the Life of Frank Buchman* (London: Moral Re-Armament, 1952), pp. 3-4.
[169] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

ability in treating with individuals by anticipating their needs and wants and his keenness in discerning and uniting kindred personalities, we have all the elements in an admirable degree for a socially influential meeting. And if there were injected here a strong religious challenge, all the elements would be present for an influential religious gathering.[170]

By 1918 Buchman had formulated in his own mind the movement's method of evangelism,[171] and in 1927, when he launched *A First Century Christian Fellowship* at Oxford, he began to train leaders in these principles.[172] At that time the "Five C's" contained the formula of MRA. Lately it has been changed to the "Five D's," an elaboration upon the previous formulation but otherwise identical with it.[173] And here we shall consider the technique as presented in the "Five D's"—Demonstration, Diagonsis, Deliverance, Decision, Destiny.[174] It is socratic in method, in which there is educed from the individual the consciousness of sin and emotions of complete repentance. Each step lays the ground work for each succeeding phase of technique.

Demonstration involves first of all acts of friendliness and civility toward the person to be converted.[175] The missionary must be natural and show himself to be what he appears to be. This includes being honest about oneself in speaking about one's own sinfulness and conversion, what is known as "sharing for witness," in order to be convincing and to establish in the mind of the person outside the *Group* that the member is an individual who has experienced what sin and conversion really mean.[176]

In the second phase of the first step, the "message" of MRA is demonstrated as being (1) the answer to this par-

[170] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. x, in the Foreword by Alan Thornhill.
[171] Supra, pp. 24-25.
[172] Supra, p. 10.
[173] For an explanation of the "Five C's" see Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
[174] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
[175] *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.
[176] *Ibid.*, pp. 51-55.

ticular individual's spiritual problems, especially his own sinfulness, and the universal answer for all men, in that it involves fundamentally only a change in life;[177] (2) the complete answer for solving problems on all levels of human life, personal, national and international; and (3) as demanding "total commitment" to *Group* principles and aims.[178]

The second step, Diagnosis, is a study of the moral defects of a person as shown in his external actions.[179] For example, we are told that those guilty of sexual perversions often indicate this by the type of clothes they wear and their mannerism.[180] On the basis of this diagnosis, the amateur "soul-surgeon" must try to educe from the individual admittance of his sins. If the one to be converted proves to be adamant, the convert maker should show how much good he has accomplished in answering the like needs in other people, or introduce him to friends who best illustrate the answer to problems diagnosed to be his, and, at the "inspired" time, show how the same problems were solved in the convert makers own life.[181]

After the convert has been convinced of the diagnosis and that the *Group* can help him, the third step, deliverance from sinfulness through honesty and "restitution" is carried out.[182] The process of deliverance can be broken down into four stages: (1) the convert must measure his life according to the yardstick of the four absolute moral standards: absolute purity, absolute honesty, absolute love, and absolute unselfishness, under the light of "divine guidance";[183] (2) he should share his life with the convert maker in all things;[184] (3) "restitution" must be made to individuals wronged because of "dishonesty, impurities, selfishness, and dislike";[185] (4) finally, the convert must accept

[177] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[178] *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
[179] *Ibid.*, p. 58.
[180] *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.
[181] *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
[182] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[183] *Ibid.*, p. 71.
[184] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[185] *Ibid.*

"... a Higher Will than his own as the central directing force of his life."[186]

Up to this point, the process has been more one of purgation. The person to be converted now has brought out into the light of day his sinfulness and knows the answer to his problems; he must now decide to change—

> The decision he needs to make is: that from this day forward his life will be wholly given to meeting the deepest needs of men and nations. It is a contract just as definite as getting married....[187]

This means the convert must now regulate his daily life according to the absolute moral standards, have a "quiet time" every day to listen for "divine guidance," and admit his failures and make "restitution" if necessary.[188] He must "... bring every relationship, possession, and plan under the authority of a Superior Will."[189] In practice this means submitting everything to "divine guidance" and the guidance of the *Group*. He must, finally, dedicate his whole life to remaking the world.[190]

The Destiny of the member of the *Group* is to make conversions as he was converted in association with other members of the movement. In short, it is to change the world.[191]

Although every method used to further the *Group* "message" finally resolves itself to a treatment of the individual as described above, nevertheless, other methods have been employed successfully by MRA and deserve our attention here.[192]

The "houseparty" is an informal gathering of members and "guests,"[193] often lasting a considerable length of time,[194] at which the life of the members is demonstrated and conversions sought.[195] The *Group* has not overlooked the advantage of pleasant surroundings and satisfactory

[186] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[187] *Ibid.*, p. 77.
[188] *Ibid.*
[189] *Ibid.*, p. 78.
[190] *Ibid.*
[191] *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.
[192] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 202.
[193] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
[194] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 202.
[195] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

food and conveniences at these meetings.[196] Introductions are made in a spirit of friendliness and good will; and, in general, those present are made to feel at home.[197] In the morning participants are directed to have a "quiet time" by themselves. After breakfast there is a common "quiet time" with Bible reading, prayer, etc.[198] But, by far, the most important feature of the "houseparty" is the gatherings during which testimonies are related, where repetitious accounts of conversions are given and successes emphasized, needless to say, in an effort to gain converts.[199] In fact, the whole "houseparty" is nothing more than an application of the principles of personal evangelism to a group instead of to an individual. As an historical fact this was probably the introduction into the *Group* of a mass methodology. Out of this original concept there grew the plan for the large "assemblies" of which we have spoken.[200]

To train followers in the principles of MRA, two training centers were established, one in Caux, Switzerland[201] and the other at Mackinac Island, Michigan.[202] At Caux, a college was founded called *The College of the Good Road.* The aim of this institution is to turn out men and women who are well imbued with the doctrine and practice of the movement. From these centers teams go forth to carry on the work of conversion.[203]

MRA has also made extensive use of plays and motion pictures as media for propagandizing the movement.[204] These dramatic productions are very similar in structure to the

[196] See J. S. Post, "What Happens at a Buchman House-Party?" *The Blackfriars,* XI (1930) 718.

[197] *Ibid.,* p. 719.

[198] *Ibid.,* pp. 719-720.

[199] *Ibid.,* pp. 720-721.

[200] See Clark, *op. cit.,* p. 31.

[201] See Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 152.

[202] *Ibid.,* p. 138.

[203] See *Caux: Report of the World Assembly For Moral Re-Armament, 1949* (Caux: Editions De Caux, 1949), pp. 181-182.

[204] See Buchman, *op. cit.,* xviii (in the Foreword by Alan Thornhill).

mystery plays of the Middle Ages in that they are representations of how problems are solved through the application of the ethical principles of the *Group*.[205]

The movement publishes a regular *MRA Information Service* bulletin and an illustrated quarterly called *New World News*.[206] Both contain reports on current activities and stories on how MRA has succeeded by the application of its principles in solving modern social problems. Also prominent in these publications are statements of endorsement by outstanding figures in all fields.

How successful MRA has been in the use of this indoctrination method will be seen in the next two sections of this chapter.

(C) MRA Membership

According to *Group* propaganda, MRA is not an organization nor an institution and, therefore, does not entail membership.[207] But such a statement does not coincide completely with the facts. Whether it was intended or not, the functions of an organization were forced upon the *Group* early in its history because of its world-wide work.[208] The direction and co-ordination of such global operation involving, as it does, the dispatching of teams all over the world, and the enormous financial costs of this and other activities of the movement, demanded some kind of centralization.[209] Hence, a governing committee of leaders was set up to administer the policy the *Group*. It was then legally incorporated in England, Canada, and the United States and purchased property in various parts of the world to house its administrative offices.[210] And thus the original concept that each

[205] See Professor Theophil Spoerri, *Basic Forces in European History* ("The College of the Good Road Lecture Series," Los Angeles: 1950), no. 3, 24.

[206] Supra, pp. 11-12.

[207] See Roots, op. cit., p. 104.

[208] See *The Oxford Group and Its Work of Moral Re-Armament*, *op cit.*, p. 15.

[209] *Ibid.*

[210] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

individual adherent to the *Group* would receive his authority and direction to act, as Buchman did, though direct "divine guidance" was no longer entirely feasible.[211] Not that the principles of the movement have been changed fundamentally with reference to this idea; but through gradual development of controls over "guidance" to determine its genuineness, the *Group* has taken to itself more and more the direction of these "divine inspirations," so much so that if individual "guidance" does not correspond to *Group* considerations, it is not deemed to be "divine guidance" at all.[212] Therefore, it would seem that in practice at least the movement is an organization.

But to be a member of the *Group* one must merely undergo the process of "change" as described above.[213] Therefore, anyone may belong to it,[214] and since it maintains that it is neither a religious movement nor a sect,[215] it has attracted people of varied religious and racial backgrounds. It is true that the great majority of the members have been and are non-Catholics—the leadership of the movement is vested in the hands of Protestants, some of whom are or were ministers[216]—but Catholics have also been associated with MRA in diverse degrees.[217]

To give an estimate of the number of adherents to the *Group* is practically impossible because such a list has never been published. But we are assured in MRA publications that the number is high,[218] which it most probably is; its influence, however, is broader than its membership.[219]

Participation of members in the organizational setup of the *Group* is varied. All the functions of the movement with

[211] Supra, pp. 5-6.
[212] Infra, p. 53
[213] Supra, pp. 27-29.
[214] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
[215] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
[216] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[217] *Ibid.*, pp. 71-78.
[218] See Roots, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
[219] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

regard to administration and policy are under the direction of the Council of Management made up of seventeen members.[220] A Finance Committee has been established to handle financial matters.[221] There are also a Director of Publications and press officers.[222] About a thousand members are "full-time" workers in the *Group*.[223] These are for the most part the nucleus of the teams which serve as missionaries for the movement and probably carry out the clerical work which an organization entails. Teams establish "cells" in various countries to stabilize and carry on the work of local evangelization.[224] MRA seems to have "cells" in every sphere of public life, and the influence of these has not been without success.[225]

(D) MRA Successes

We could not begin to catalogue the proven successes in convert making which the *Group* has had in all categories of human life, from American teen-agers to die-hard Communists,[226] from housewives to atomic scientists,[227] from workers to parliamentarians in a great many countries.[228] Since the end of World War II alone to 1954 about sixty-three thousand people from one hundred and eighteen countries have attended assemblies at Caux, Switzerland; and these have been to a great extent leaders in various fields in their native lands.[229] It is not at all surprising to see prime ministers, generals, members of parliaments, union leaders, industrialists, and Communists at these international gath-

[220] See *The Oxford Group and Its Work of Moral Re-Armament*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
[221] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
[222] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[223] See Roots, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
[224] *Ibid.*
[225] *Ibid.*
[226] *Ibid.*, p. 106.
[227] See *MRA Information Service*, III, No. 10 (Oct. 1954), 37.
[228] *Ibid.*
[229] See *The Tablet* (London), June 19, 1954, p. 590.

erings.[230] To determine how many of these are "changed" or even influenced by the *Group* would be an impossible task, but the number of conversions among them is surprisingly high.[231]

In considering the success in which the "message" of MRA has resulted, we cannot pass over the great influence it has had in the lives of many Catholics. Sir Arnold Lunn stated in the London *Tablet* that "... about 15 per cent of those who visited Caux [from the end of World War II to 1954] were Catholics."[232] If we were to take 15 per cent of 63,000 as an approximate figure of those in attendance since World War II, we would arrive at a total of 9,450, a goodly number of Catholics. Certainly this figure does not represent Catholic membership in MRA, but we can list the Catholics represented by this number along with any other Catholics who have ever been influenced at all by the movement as dividing up into four groupings: (1) Some "... see MRA in a non-religious light and collaborate [with it] on a purely social level,"[233] as one would co-operate with any socially beneficial group. (2) Others are disquieted by the Protestant atmosphere and would desire a clarification of principles before co-operating with the movement.[234] (3) There have been lapsed Catholics who were brought back to the practice of Catholicism through the efforts of the *Group*.[235] A list of over one hundred Communists, lapsed Catholics, was sent to Rome on the occasion of their conversion to the practice of Catholicism through MRA.[236] But the Protestant influence upon the religious mentality of such converts cannot be lightly set aside.[237] It might also be added that such

[230] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[231] See Peter Howard, *The World Rebuilt* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1951), p. 161.

[232] See *The Tablet* (London), June 19, 1954, p. 591.

[233] Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

[234] *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

[235] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[236] See *The Tablet*, (London), July 17, 1954, p. 66.

[237] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 75. See Infra, the whole of Chapter 2.

beneficial results do not validate or invalidate the principles of the movement. God can and does use error and even evil to promote good.[238] (4) Some Catholics have become full-time workers in the *Group*.

Most of the Catholic members of MRA are taken from the third and fourth classes. To make some sort of numerical calculation as to the number of these, let us say that a minimum approximation would be about one hundred. It might be well to point out here that the lawfulness of such Catholic membership depends not only upon the question of whether or not MRA is a religious sect, but also upon the common dangers to faith and morals which the *Group* may or may not harbor. These two problems will be treated in the succeeding chapters of this work.

(E) The Attraction of MRA

Up to now, we have considered the successes of MRA. It remains for us to treat of those features of the movement which have most contributed to the attainment of these results.

Most authors who have written upon the subject seem to be in agreement on the great psychological attraction of the movement.[239] The apparent non-sectarian character of the *Group*, according to Dr. Clark, the fact that it is devoid of "sterile" dogma, religious argumentation, "empty" liturgy, and does not consist in "... a one-day-a-week pharisaical brand of Christian respectability"[240] complements the fundamental desire for goodness in people untapped by such religious conventions.[241]

There is no doubt that there is this religious mentality just described to which such an organization as MRA would appeal—diverse features of the *Group* appeal to different

[238] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.

[239] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 19. See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 238. See R. A. Knox, "The Group Movement: Second-hand Impressions of Buchmanism," *The Clergy Review*, V (1933), 270.

[240] Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-242.

[241] *Ibid.*

mentalities[242]—but it is our desire here to establish those things in the *Group* which might have a universal appeal. The *Group* bases its approach upon the fundamental spiritual need in people, as a remote means of conversion, by developing this need in a way in which, perhaps, it had never been developed before. The movement challenges an individual to be good and shows that it can be done.[243] It fills him up with a plethora of testimony, often intimate in detail, of the sinfulness of others and how they were changed.[244] It indicates that all sinners may thus change if they will only try.[245] And, as in Alcoholics Anonymous, the individual does not attempt to do this alone. In the common striving for "conversions" the *Group* offers the member fellowship, security, and position to an extremely satisfying degree. Nor does it only speak of this; it actually puts it into practice.[246] Friendship in the truest sense of the word is offered to the convert,[247] a friendship based upon the sharing of the highest spiritual ideals and aims.[248] And in this atmosphere of mutual love for himself as he really is, the convert finds a security and status which, perhaps, he never experienced before.[249] A spiritual challenge, seeming to answer man's fundamental spiritual longing, coupled with a homogeneous social environment go far in explaining the universal success of the *Group*.[250]

In considering the general attractions of the *Group*, we cannot pass over the arresting power of the good example which it gives. Members of the movement give all the appearances of living what they profess.[251] But this is not merely limited to example. A great deal of time during

[242] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[243] See William Jaeger, *The World Struggle of Ideologies* ("The College of the Good Road Lecture Series," London: 1950), no. 2, 3.

[244] Supra, pp. 29-30.

[245] Supra, p. 27.

[246] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

[247] See Knox, "The Group Movement," *op. cit.*, p. 270.

[248] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

[249] *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.

[250] *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250.

[251] See Count Carlo Lovera di Castiglione, *Some Reflections on the Secret of Caux* (Caux: Editions de Caux, 1950), p. 3.

MRA gatherings is allotted to public meetings in which a long line of members approach the microphone to tell how the movement converted them and the success it has had in achieving its aims. Over and over again one hears how MRA is the salvation of the world, that without the application of its principles peace and happiness will never be attained, and that personal change along MRA lines is the only sure means to universal temporal prosperity.[252] The uncritical mind cannot but be overwhelmed by such repetitious "witnessing." And this is not surprising when one considers that every social grace, which the *Group* employs to an admirable degree, is a subtle means of propagandizing.[253]

Another general attraction of the *Group* consists in its attempt to establish a platform of uniform and unified action above the differences of race, creed, and class to overcome current social catastrophes. It seeks to set itself up as a universalism under whose banners all may fight if they but set aside their differences and emphasize the principles of MRA, which all are considered to hold in common as religious truth.[254] When one considers the great threat of Communism today and the need for united action against it, just how appealing this feature of the *Group* is, becomes evident.

(F) MRA Failures

We could not justly end a discussion of the successes of MRA without adding a brief consideration of the failures of the movement. It seems that perseverance is not characteristic of *Group* association.[255] Perhaps the ideals set up by MRA are too demanding. Many of the names which formerly appeared in the publications of the *Group,* championing the movement, have long ago disappeared from their literature. Certainly its shortcomings become more appar-

[252] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
[253] *Ibid.*
[254] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[255] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

ent the longer one is connected with the movement, much the same as the defects of an apparent piece of art register upon the mind after repeated study. Thus in America and England, the *Group* has become largely discredited and not only for spiritual reasons.[256] The fact that MRA has no social principles, but that is not the whole of the answer as is to handle great social problems. It is very true that people must be prepared as individuals to put into practice just social principles, but that is not the whole of the answer as MRA would like us to believe.[258] To leave people thus disposed without a proper social doctrine is to doom them to defeat the very aims which the *Group* proposes to accomplish.[259] And thus just as they become amateur spiritual directors, so also do they become amateur sociologists, economists, and statesmen, dependent ultimately upon a vague "divine guidance." And since MRA proposes only reformed individuals and not also a better social teaching to improve society, it preserves in principle all the evils of social systems themselves which do not arise from the unethical practices of individuals.[260] The *Group,* therefore, seems to like things as they are but does not like people as they are. People must be "changed," and the principles of this "change" as taught by MRA will be discussed from a Catholic viewpoint in the succeeding chapters.

[256] See *The Tablet* (London), September 11, 1954, p. 258.
[257] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
[258] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
[259] *Ibid.*
[260] See *Moral Re-Armament, a Study, op. cit.*, p. 37.

PART II

THE RELIGIOUS NATURE OF THE MOVEMENT

CHAPTER II

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE MOVEMENT

The doctrine of *Moral Re-Armament,* as the name indicates, is explicitly moral in nature.[1] It is concerned with the morality of people's actions.[2] There is no one who would deny this. But the *Group* would emphatically deny the following: that it is an organization; that it is a Christian religious movement or sect.[3]

In the first chapter it was shown that de facto MRA has found it necessary to set up a certain amount of administrative organization. It will be the purpose of this chapter to show that the *Group* is based upon Christian religious principles but that these are at considerable variance with Catholic truth.

Moral-Re-Armament claims to be based on a divine revelation.[4] The official literature of the *Group* declares explicitly that it is concerned with "vital Christianity."[5] Vital Christianity cannot be anything but action based on revealed principles. Buchman himself, the founder of *Moral Re-Armament,* speaks of the *Group* as a Christian revolution.[6] The statements themselves which MRA uses to describe what the movement is and what it does are full of terms which could not have been discovered except from a knowledge of Sacred Scripture (Holy Spirit, Christianity, Christian Faith, divine guidance, the Bible, etc.). The teachings

[1] Cf. Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 4: "The Oxford Group is a Christian revolution, whose concern is vital Christianity."

[2] Cf. Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 84: "MRA means honesty, purity, unselfishness and love-absolutely, personally and nationally."

[3] See Suenens, *op. cit.,* p. 29.

[4] Cf. *Articles of Incorporation of Moral Re-Armament in the United States* (as cited by) Alan Thornhill in the Foreword to Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. xv: " 'Our learning has been the truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit.' "

[5] Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 4.

[6] *Ibid.*

themselves, which employ these terms, are proposed as explicitly revealed: " 'Our learning has been the truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit.' "[7] Buchman himself again sounds the official note when he says the following about *Moral Re-Armament*: "There is your ideology. It is the whole message of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."[8] There is no need to go further. It is quite evident that the teaching of *Moral Re-Armament* claims to be based on a divine revelation.

The teachings of MRA are already at odds with the doctrine of the Catholic Church in general. Catholics believe that the whole revelation of Christ as proposed by the sole infallible teaching authority of the Catholic Church must be accepted by the faithful.

There are a number of principles making up this "whole message of the Gospel" according to MRA, all of which are oriented to action as is evident from the expressed moral purpose of the *Group*. Thus there is no purely speculative treatment of doctrines. The chief tenets of the movement are "divine guidance," the "four absolute moral standards," "change," "sharing," and "restitution."

(A) Divine Guidance

We read in *Group* literature that man cannot change himself, that ". . . goodwill, moral philosophy and sermons"[9] are not enough. There is need for a power and light outside of man capable of "changing" him. The ultimate source of such a power and light is said to be God, and it comes to man directly as "divine guidance" with the concomitant divine assistance to act.[10]

Any explanation of the term "divine guidance" would be tautological. It is simply that—God directing our every ac-

[7] *Articles of Incorporation, op. cit.*, p. xv.

[8] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

[9] Paul Campbell and Peter Howard, *Remaking Men* (New York: Arrowhead Books, Inc., 1954), p. 43.

[10] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

tion by directly communicating to us what He wants us to do. Let Buchman himself describe it:

> At the first Whitsun God spoke to a group of ordinary men. May He not today have a plan which can solve the problems of a troubled world?
>
> The Holy Spirit is the most intelligent source of information in the world today. He has the answer to every problem. Everywhere when men will let Him, He is teaching them how to live.
>
> Divine guidance must become the normal experience of ordinary men and women. Any man can pick up divine messages if he will put his receiving set in order. Definite, accurate, adequate information can come from the Mind of God to the minds of men. This is normal prayer.[11]

From this and other statements it is possible to analyze the teaching on "divine guidance." First of all, it is of divine supernatural origin,[12] for it is the Holy Spirit who is said to illuminate our minds. Since this "guidance," then, proceeds from God as the Author of the supernatural order, it involves, secondly, a supernatural and (they say) often new revelation.[13]

The manner in which Buchman speaks of these illuminations of the Holy Spirit would seem to indicate that the revelation God has for the world today is different from that which He gave the Apostles.[14]

Thirdly, the content of such communications is, for the most part, moral in nature. For example, a person may dis-

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[12] Cf. Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 189: "Our faith must be illumined, must have light. So different faiths, all faiths, need this supernatural gleam."

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 116: "'... there is still one Supreme Source from whom all can draw new power ... new illumination. God speaks directly to the heart....'"

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 48: The "newness" of this revelation extends also to all human institutions. "New men, new homes, new industry, new nations, a new world. We have not yet tapped the great creative sources in the Mind of God. God has a plan, and combined moral and spiritual forces of the nation can find that plan."

cover from this "guidance" the answer to the questions: "How am I to be honest? What should I do with my money? How can I fight against evil? When is force justified?"[15] However, it may extend to much more than this. It may include illumination for every action which a person performs, even trivialities.[16] Lately, however, the *Group* has tried to temper complete reliance on "divine guidance" in all things. The movement has attempted to introduce the functions of reason, conscience, the Bible, and circumstances as aids in discovering the will of God.[17] But when we examine this question we shall see that these helps are found to be seriously wanting because MRA gives them a limitation far short of their true scope, and ultimately they are made subservient to "divine guidance" itself.[18]

Fourthly, the recipients of such supernatural illuminations are each and every individual[19] and the *Group* as a whole through the individual.[20]

These communications are, fifthly, "definite, accurate, [and] adequate."[21] This gives to "divine guidance" a certitude and sufficiency for action based upon the sincerity of the individual in discovering the genuineness of the illumination.[22] To determine whether or not the message had a divine origin, there have been established a number of negative "checks" by the *Group*:

> Does this guidance contradict the highest stages of faith we have already attained?[23]

[15] H. Kenaston Twitchell, *How Do You Make Up Your Mind?* (Los Angeles: Pacific Press, no date), p. 7.

[16] See Twitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 15. See also Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

[17] See Twitchell, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-17.

[18] Infra, pp. 49-53.

[19] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 36. See also Twitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

[21] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[22] See Twitchell, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

[23] It is difficult to ascertain what is meant here by faith. The *Group* does act upon faith in God in the sense of trust. It would seem then that what is meant here by faith is the experience in "divine guid-

Does it contradict the revelation given us by Christ in the Bible?[24]

Does this guidance conform to the four moral standards?

Does it conflict with our obvious duties, especially those that concern other people?[25]

Nevertheless, as can easily be seen, many of the checks here described resolve ultimately into individual or collective "guidance" itself, beyond which there is no resolution.[26] Williamson tells us that in cases of doubtful "guidance," which cannot be otherwise verified, the judgment of the "inner group" and finally of Buchman himself is determinative.[27]

Sixthly, the sole condition necessary for receiving "divine guidance" is moral uprightness and subjection of oneself entirely to the will of God.[28] The proximate necessary condition is merely listening, during a "quiet time," for the voice of God. This is not only described as "normal prayer"

ance" and reliance upon God to which an individual has attained up to that time.

[24] Again we stumble on the difficulty of determining just what the content of this revelation is.

[25] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10. This is the most complete rendering of these "checks" that the author has been able to find. It is interesting to note that in Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 36 and in Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 78 and p. 48, these "checks" are reduced in the former to three: the four standards, the Bible, and the *Group* itself; and in the latter to two, i.e., the *Group* itself, and the standards.

[26] Cf. Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 36: "No one can be wholly God-controlled who works alone. It is to a group of willing men and women that God speaks most clearly." *Ibid.*, p. 29: "They [ordinary people] are forming a new public opinion which demands a new quality of leadership. Such leadership can only come from men and women who speak with authority—an authority based on daily experience of the guidance of God."

[27] See Williamson, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-213.

[28] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

but also as a necessary condition of human life.[29] One must have "divine guidance" and is obliged to carry it out.[30]

How different MRA teaching on divine guidance is from the tenets of Catholic theology can be readily seen from the following brief examination of Catholic doctrine on the subject.

The Holy Spirit certainly does play an active part in the sanctification of individual men and in special manner guides them through the ordinary instrumentality of His sevenfold gift.[31] However, this guidance is not at all to be confused with the mystical phenomena of prophecy, private revelation, or interior words which are *gratiae gratis datae* and, therefore, extraordinary.[32] We shall find that what Catholics call the extraordinary action of the Holy Spirit is classified as ordinary and normal by the *Group*. To accomplish this, let us first consider what the nature of the gifts is in Catholic theology.

A distinction is drawn in Catholic theology between supernatural virtues and their corresponding gifts. Both are supernaturally infused habits.[33] Habits, however, are distinguished by their formal objects, and, while infused virtues have as their guiding principle reason illumined by faith, the gifts have as their moving factor the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus while the virtue and its corresponding gift (faith and the gift of understanding, for example) treat of the same material object (revealed truth as presented by the Church), they, nevertheless, differ in their formal mode of act (faith as the simple adherence to revealed truth, and the gift of understanding as a percep-

[29] Supra, p. 43.

[30] Cf. Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 198: "The Holy Spirit is uniting humanity through men who listen to Him and obey. It needs to be a daily experience."

[31] See Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, trans. Sister Mary Timothea Doyle, O.P. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1937), p. 46 and pp. 235 ff.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 292.

tion of its depths). The same may be said of all the virtues and their corresponding gifts.[34] The important thing to remember here is that the virtue and its corresponding gift have the *same material object,* the same subject matter, but treat it in a different way.

In no way can we say that the *Group's* teaching on "divine guidance" is akin to the normal activity of the Holy Spirit through His gifts, for in MRA this distinction between the virtue and its corresponding gift would extend beyond the difference of guiding principle to include a distinction in the material object also. As we shall see, the leaders of the movement permit an individual person, a Catholic let us say, to adhere to the truths of Catholicism because these truths constitute the content of his belief;[35] but in their own teaching on the "divine guidance" of the Holy Spirit these same leaders act as though that content of Catholic belief does not exist, or is not integrally necessary, or, at least, is not universally valid for modern man or the modern world. According to their teaching it would seem that God had one revelation for the Apostles but has another "plan" for the problems of the world today.[36] Thus the gift of understanding is no longer concerned with the same material object as is the infused virtue of faith, but itself becomes the source of a "new" revelation and, therefore, of a "new" faith. This stand of *Moral Re-Armament* places its teaching on "divine guidance" outside the realm of traditional Christian orthodoxy and categorizes it as prophetic and productive of a new public revelation. The assumption of the movement is that man does not possess in Christian revelation the adequate means of knowing how to live the kind of supernatural life that God desires him to live. The assumption further includes the supposition that God will reveal this mode of supernatural life to each individual if he will only permit it.[37]

Because, however, each and every individual and the

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 276-277.
[35] Infra, pp. 101-102.
[36] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
[37] *Ibid.*

Group as a whole through the individual is to be the recipient of such "divine guidance," it is not at all clear just when a stable body of definite and systematized revealed doctrines —principally moral in nature—will be set up for this "new" plan God has for the world. The reason for this is, of course, because the movement is still in the process of development. At the present time it would seem that revelations privately given, although contradictory in different individuals, may be followed as supernaturally revealed norms of actions.[38] The *Group* itself, however, as we shall see, has set itself up as the authentic interpreter of such "revelations." This method of procedure would seem to indicate the ultimate formation of a set creed.

And thus MRA confounds the extraordinary action of the Holy Spirit in revelations and in interior words, with the ordinary action of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity through the ordinary instrumentality of His gifts. We should like to mention in particular how the movement's teaching on "divine guidance" affects the virtue of prudence and its corresponding gift of counsel. According to Catholic belief, through the instrumentality of this gift, the Holy Spirit may *sometimes* clarify a problem instantly, when a grave decision is to be made, in resolving the apparent opposition between two duties.[39] We should always pray for such guidance in all our undertakings, but to neglect first to use all the ordinary means that God has given us to ascertain His Will even under the pretext of abandoning ourselves to Divine Providence, would be to tempt God.[40] Of course, as a person progresses in sanctity the action of the Holy Spirit becomes more apparent in his soul,[41] to which the lives of the saints well attest; but to tell beginners in the spiritual life to abandon prudence and give themselves over entirely to an ill-controlled "divine guidance," to expect its infallible coming, to profess its infallible reception

[38] Supra, pp. 43-44.
[39] See Garrigou-Lagrange, *op. cit.*, p. 277.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 278.
[41] *Ibid.*

whenever one desires it, foregoing the use of other means of determining God's will, to expect "accurate, adequate answers" and even a "new" revelation would be heretical, sinful, and spiritually imprudent. Moral Re-Armament has thus so far distinguished between the material object of prudence, either natural or supernatural, and the gift of counsel that the former no longer has a material object and has ceased to function at all.[42]

MRA, however, as we mentioned, has lately been trying to ascribe to reason some role in determining the will of God for an individual. But it is difficult to determine just what part they want reason to play. At times the disdain for human wisdom in the movement is appalling, nor is this restricted to the earlier days of the movement.[43] Buchman in his speeches shows he will have little to do with the efforts of the human mind; it is all "God-control" and "God-guidance."[44] Other writers in the *Group* stress the use of reason along with conscience, the Bible, circumstances, and the *Group* itself;[45] but the concept of their proper function is extremely undeveloped.

1. REASON AND "DIVINE GUIDANCE"

Human wisdom, the movement tells us, can only take us so far. "If you want to know the plan of God, . . . get all the facts that reason can give. Do all the thinking that molds these facts into a conclusion, but then *wait on God.*"[46] Wait on an indication that this or that is His Will, of course. The obvious question that arises immediately in the mind of the Catholic is, if we are to "wait on God" for guarantees that our thought is right and true, then why think at all? If I cannot act after my mind has prudently formed a conclusion, but must wait on an answer from God or for some sign that

[42] Infra, p. 50.
[43] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 29, and p. 116.
[44] *Ibid.* These expressions are used throughout Buchman's speeches.
[45] See Twitchell, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-12.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

the rational dictate of my mind is morally true and good, then the validity of thought is either negated entirely and of no consequence, or its certitude is so debilitated that it cannot produce a prudent norm of action, but must have its conclusions verified explicitly by God's intervention. The Catholic, on the contrary, does not believe that God ordinarily relieves man of the necessity of using his reasoning powers. The Catholic is convinced that God wants him to act according to the laws of prudence and not to wait on the reception of some kind of supernatural indication of what he should do or whether the conclusions of prudence, properly formed, are God's will or not. This kind of supernatural intervention is thus not the constant, ordinary norm of ordinary action, especially, as we have indicated, in the lives of beginners in the spiritual life. God may sometimes give us such guidance (extraordinary guidance of this kind would be very rare), according to the ordinary function of the gifts, but its expectation should not preclude the exercise of the virtue of prudence nor forestall our acting according to the conclusions at which we have arrived. The Holy Spirit "breathes where He will."[47] Thus such guidance is not given to the ordinary person anytime that he desires it. Again it is true that we are exhorted to pray to God for guidance. But in our lives such guidance does not take the place of but rather consists in God's help in seeking His Will in the manifold ways in which He has already indicated it to us by the natural and complete use of our reason, through His entire Revelation as presented by His Church, through the study and experience of other prudent men. We do not expect God to communicate to us directly with a precise message and tell us what to do.[48] Even in cases where His will is not clear, we, nevertheless, after praying for His guidance, act properly if we but do that which seems best and right in our eyes.[49]

[47] *John*, 3, 8.

[48] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

[49] See Dom John Chapman, *The Spiritual Letters of Dom John Chapman* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1946), p. 82.

2. CONSCIENCE AND "DIVINE GUIDANCE"

We are told by the *Group* that conscience is a "... forceful channel of the guidance of God."[50] However, they add, it is only one means for knowing a part of God's plan. And even in this conscience is, nevertheless, completely subservient to the direct "divine guidance" of God, for the *Group* leaves it untrained in moral precepts and their application.[51] Catholic moral theology teaches us that except for the most universal norms of morality, conscience thus considered can aid the individual little in discovering the will of God.[52] And this is a direct result of the abhorrence of the movement of any systematic moral theology; in fact, it has none. And thus it leaves an individual to form his conscience with knowledge directly received from God!

3. THE BIBLE AND "DIVINE GUIDANCE"

According to the *Group,* the only light the Bible can shed upon God's plan in an individual life lies in the experiences it contains, for the Bible is, in their eyes, merely the account of direct guidance in the lives of Biblical figures, culminating in Christ, and the source of comparison when we are similarly confronted with moral decisions.[53] But whose interpretation of the Bible shall we follow? And how can

[50] Twitchell, *op. cit.,* p. 6.

[51] *Ibid.,* pp. 6-7: "Guidance still comes daily through conscience. But conscience is only a part of the guidance of God. In fact, conscience directed by the human mind alone, without the clear, clean seeking of the will of God, can land you in confusion and futility. Conscience itself must be guided by God.... Conscience without guidance from God is like using the curb of your street to direct your car instead of the steering wheel."

[52] See Dominicus M. Prümmer, O.P., *Manuale Theologiae Moralis* (Freiburg, Germany: Herder, 1955), p. 237.

[53] Cf. Twitchell, *op. cit.,* p. 8: "...the Bible is man's experience of God written down.... God uses the Bible also as an arsenal of truth for every man's action ... time and again a particular verse has come to my eyes or my memory that gave the answer to a particular question."

the member of the *Group* interpret the Bible except by individual "divine guidance" and private judgment?

4. CIRCUMSTANCES AND "DIVINE GUIDANCE"

The *Group* teaches that circumstances themselves take on a post-factum role in determining the will of God. Eventual success becomes the certificate of proper action, the verification that the course of action blindly instituted was after all the performance of God's Will.[54] Again the Catholic knows that there will be times when one has to act blindly, as it were, in doing what seems to be the will of God; and in these cases circumstances, in the form of successful outcome, may verify the course of action.[55] But this is only valid in a restricted area where all other sources of knowledge of God's Will, as were enumerated, have been exhausted; and the course of action finally taken does not contradict any known moral principle. *Moral Re-Armament,* however, teaches its members to make moral decisions on the chance or with the blind belief that the outcome later on will be interpreted as verifying the course of action followed,[56] which course of action, as the will of God, the Catholic knows, should have been discovered elsewhere.

However, in the MRA system there does seem to be an area in which circumstances take on an ante-factum role;[57] but even here, because of the lack of an adequate moral theology, the proper use of circumstances in finding out the will of God is vitiated, for there is the grave danger that circumstances themselves, in which one finds oneself, become the sole norm of morality. In Catholic moral theology moral circumstances have a bearing on the liceity or non-liceity

[54] Cf. Twitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 10: "Innumerable times I have taken a course of action on faith and then as I walked ahead, circumstances verified the rightness of the steps."

[55] Supra, p. 50.

[56] Cf. Twitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 11: "The basis of a God-guided life is faith, not sight."

[57] *Ibid.*: "And even in the midst of decision, when there seem to be many choices, circumstances will be used to point the way."

of an act. But the relevant morality of these circumstances themselves is also determined by moral theology, of which the *Group* is bereft.

5. THE *Group* AND "DIVINE GUIDANCE"

And what assurance does the *Group* itself give us for the authenticity of these divine "communications"? Ultimately, only that the *Group* itself, and Buchman in particular, have the authority to decide. Such is to constitute a new "leadership" which can ". . . only come from men and women who speak with authority—an authority based on daily experience of the guidance of God."[58] The movement thus admits of no other authority, in principle, save that given an individual through "divine guidance." Buchman protests that it is Christ who leads the movement; it is God who immediately directs the movement.[59] Who, Buchman might very well ask, will gainsay our authority in religious moral matters?

(B) THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DOCTRINE

Not only is this teaching on "divine guidance" itself erroneous, but it leads to many consequent errors extremely detrimental to the faith and spiritual well-being of the faithful.

1. IN THE LIGHT OF PAPAL TEACHING

In two Papal allocutions given on March 23, 1952 (a radio broadcast),[60] and on April 18, 1952,[61] Pope Pius XII treated in detail the errors of what he termed a new concept of the

[58] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[60] See Pope Pius XII, "De Conscientia Christiana in Iuvenibus Recte Efformanda," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XXXXIV (1952), 270-278.

[61] See Pope Puis XII, "Ad Delegatas Conventui Internationali Sodalitatis Vulgo Nuncupatae 'Fédération Mondiale des Jeunesses Féminines Catholiques', Romae Habito," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XXXXIV (1952), 413-419.

moral life. The first treated of conscience inasmuch as it is the object of education.[62] The words and will of Christ establish the norm for judgments of conscience.[63] Therefore, in the formation of the Christian conscience, the law and the way of Christ must be inculcated.[64] This ethical code can be found only in the natural law and divine Revelation, the interpretation of both of which the Saviour entrusted to His Church;[65] and, accordingly, "... it is licit for no Christian (whether in his own judgment in matters of faith and morals, or in establishing a life and action according to Christian norms) to withdraw from Christ or the Church,"[66] for Christ did not entrust His Revelation to individual men but to the Church to communicate to all:[67] "An ethic, prevalently individualistic and both in interpretation and application of principles withdrawn from the direction and vigilance of the Church *is not the ethic established by Christ.*"[68]

[62] See Pope Pius XII, "De Conscientia Christiana," *op. cit.*, p. 270.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 272: "Sicchè le espressioni, quale 'il giudizio della coscienza cristiana,' o l'altra 'giudicare secondo la coscienza cristiana,' hanno questo significato: la norma della decisione ultima e personale per un'azione morale va presa dalla parola e dalla volontà di Cristo."

[64] *Ibid.*: "Da ciò consegue che formare la coscienza cristiana di un fanciullo o di un giovane consiste innanzi tutto nell'illuminare la loro mente circa la volontà di Cristo, la sua legge, la sua via."

[65] *Ibid.*: "Ma dove troveranno l'educatore e l'educando, ... la legge morale cristiana? Nella legge del Creatore impressa nel cuore di ciascuno, e nella rivelazione, nel complesso, cioè, delle verità et dei precetti, insegnati dal divino Maestro. Ambedue, ... il Redentore Gesù ha rimesso, ... nelle mani della sua Chiesa, affinchè essa le predichi a tutte le creature, le illustri el le trasmetta, intatte e difese da ogni contaminazione ed errore, dall'una all'altra generazione."

[66] Cf. F. X. Hürth, "Annotationes," *Periodica*, XLI (1952), 225; "Hinc nulli christiano (sive in suo de rebus fidei et morum iudicio, sive in sua secundum christianas normas componenda vita et actione) licet se subtrahere sive Christo sive Ecclesiae."

[67] Cf. Pope Pius XII, "De Conscientia Christiana," *op cit.*, p. 273: "Il divin Redentore ha consegnato la sua Rivelazione, di cui fanno parte essenziale gli obblighi morali, non già ai singoli uomini, ma alla sua Chiesa."

[68] F. X. Hürth, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

In the second allocution the Pope treated of the distinct errors involved in the new morality: (1) The basis for the new ethics is the actual situation with its particular and individual circumstances occurring once only and always varied. Thus the norm of conscience is not taken from universal eternal laws but from the concrete circumstances of each individual case;[69] (2) the proximate norm of action is no longer deduced from the universal moral law but from the "good" which is apparent to this particular individual making a sincere consideration of the subjective and circumstantial conditions in which he finds himself and sincerely desiring to do what is right. Consequently, such norms may at times be in agreement and at times in disagreement with traditional norms of morality;[70] (3) these dictates of a sincere conscience sincerely formed, even though opposed to traditional ethics, would be approved in the eyes of God, Who is more concerned about sincerity in action than with moral truth;[71] (4) thus the new ethics are "active" and "creative," not "passive" and "receptive,"[72] for the decision

[69] Cf. Pope Pius XII, "Ad Delegatas," *op. cit.*, p. 414: "Le signe distinctif de cette morale est qu'elle ne se base point en effet sur les lois morales universelles . . . mais sur les conditions ou circonstances réelles et concrètes dans lesquelles on doit agir, et selon lesquelles la conscience individuelle a à juger et à choisir. Cet état de choses est action humaine."

[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 414-415: "Elle [l'éthique dont Nous parlons] ne nie pas, sans plus, les concepts et les principes moraux généraux . . . mais elle les déplace du centre vers l'extrême périphérie. Il peut arriver que souvent la décision de la conscience leur corresponde. Mais ils ne sont pas, pour ainsi dire, une collection de prémisses, desquelles la conscience tire les conséquences logiques dans le cas particulier, le cas d'"une fois." Non pas! Au centre se trouve le bien, qu'il faut actuer ou conserver, en sa valeur réelle et individuelle."

[71] *Ibid.*, p. 415: "Des jugements de conscience de cette nature, si contraires qu'il semblent au premier abord aux préceptes divins, vaudraient cependant devant Dieu, parce que, dit-on, la conscience sincère sérieusement formée prime devant Dieu-même le 'précepte' et la 'loi.'"

[72] *Ibid.*: "Une telle décision est donc 'active' et 'productrice,' non 'passive' et 'réceptrice' de la décision de la loi."

of conscience "... is created from within through the proper consideration of the intellect and mind and by weighing sincerely all the circumstances of a particular case";[73] (5) in the formation of conscience nothing may be interposed between the mind of God and the individual conscience: no authority, no law, no community, no cult. Thus the decision of conscience on the part of man becomes a "personal dare" ("un risque personnel") before God, Who merely takes into account the uprightness of mind and will and man's sincere response to the voice of conscience; and He judges men according to this and not according to the objective morality of the act itself.[74]

Even though all these errors have their origin in existentialism,[75] nevertheless, a great many of the same ideas and tendencies are present in MRA's teaching on "divine guidance": (1) The *Group* teaching on illumination divorces, in principle, ethics from the Catholic Church (although, in practice, an individual Catholic, associated with the *Group,* may be left to his own theological teachings on traditional morals, MRA itself has divorced its ethics from the Catholic Church); (2) the movement teaches direct contact with God in the formation of decisions of conscience, however tempered it may be by "checks" and controls which

[73] F. X. Hurth, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

[74] Cf. Pope Pius XII, "Ad Delegatas," *op. cit.*, pp. 415-416: "L'éthique nouvelle (adaptée aux circonstances), disent ses auteurs, est éminemment 'individuelle.' Dans la détermination de conscience l'homme singulier se rencontre immédiatement avec Dieu et se décide devant Lui, sans l'intervention d'aucune ... communauté, d'aucun culte ou confession, en rien et en aucune manière. Ici il y a seulement le *je* [not mine] de l'homme et le *Je* [not mine] du Dieu personnel; non du Dieu de la loi, mais du Dieu Père, avec qui l'homme doit s'unir dans l'amour filial. Vue ainsi, la décision de conscience est donc un 'risque' personnel, selon la connaissance et l'évaluation propres, en toute sincérité devant Dieu. Ces deux choses, l'intention droite et la réponse sincère, sont se que Dieu considère; l'action ne Lui importe pas."

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 416: "Il n'est pas difficile de reconnaître comment le nouveau système moral dérive de l'existentialisme."

are themselves based upon private judgment and "divine guidance" (there is, then, practically no medium between God and the individual man in the formation of conscience); (3) thus sincerity plays a major role in determining the moral validity of action; (4) thus also conscience, in the mind of MRA, becomes "active" and "creative"; (5) if circumstances are used at all to form conscience, these become the sole norm of morality.[76]

2. PASSIVISM AND QUIETISM

These elements insinuate themselves into the Group as a direct result of its teaching on "divine guidance." The first, passivism, is an effortless seeking for truth in which God is required to enlighten us without any or with very little co-operation on our part. We are to await and to expect ready-made answers to be revealed by direct illuminations, the movement propounds, instead of using our faculties and tradition to teach us in their proper way what is true.[77] We are guaranteed direct "divine guidance" if we but follow the discipline of the *Group*.[78] Such a guarantee is based upon our giving ourselves entirely to God through the application of the four absolute standards and listening during a "quiet time" for His voice.[79] That God actually does speak to us individually is a foregone conclusion to the member of MRA. And because the movement advises the adherent to practice at once this passive form of prayer, *Moral Re-Armament* leads its disciples, by a serious spiritual imprudence, to the errors of false mysticism called quietism.[80]

What the *Group* has forgotten in all of this is that God ordinarily uses secondary causes (public revelation as proposed by the Church, tradition, our own intellects, etc.) as

[76] Supra, pp. 52-53.

[77] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-59.

[78] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] See Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, trans. by Sister M. Timothea Doyle, O.P. (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1937), pp. 404-405.

instruments for the attainment of truth. The Catholic, therefore, realizes that God does not want us to set these lightly aside and seek truth directly and immediately from His infinite knowledge. God wants us to seek Him, His Goodness and Truth, in all that He has made and with all the means He has given us; otherwise, He has made all of these in vain.

There is, indeed, a time for setting aside the use of our faculties and for practicing the repose of passive prayer; but it is not at the beginning of the spiritual life. Such a policy of action is wrong because it is based upon the presumption that each individual has a proximate and individual call to the mystical life.[81] This attitude will inevitably lead to the errors of quietism, that infused contemplation of Infinite Truth and Goodness can be acquired at the beginning of the spiritual life through one's own efforts and by the cessation of all operation.[82]

How differently the prudent Catholic spiritual director acts, well and long trained in the intricacies of theology and experienced in the guidance of souls. He realizes that all souls are called in a general and remote manner to the mystical life,[83] but he does not presume to impose any soul upon the way of passive prayer (infused contemplation) until definite signs of such an individual calling from God are provenly manifest.[84]

Compare also the soul directed by the Catholic confessor secure in the truth of revealed Catholic mystical and ascetical theology with the soul of the adherent of the *Group,* insecure in the imaginings which come while listening for God's voice during a "quiet time," imposing themselves upon God with a daring which would have caused the saints to shudder!

But this is not all! It is not to the normal and ordinary divine intimacy of the mystical life that MRA impels its members,[85] but to the extraordinary higher degrees![86] And

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 404.
[82] *Ibid.*, pp. 404-405.
[83] *Ibid.*, pp. 345-346.
[84] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[85] *Ibid.*, pp. 419-420.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 439.

this is evident from what we have said about their expectation of divine "revelations." See this also in the light of Catholic teaching that humility does not permit one to aspire to these extraordinary degrees.[87]

3. ILLUMINISM

The correlative of this passivism is illuminism. If the whole activity of thought is cancelled, or relegated to an ineffectual role, and one is urged to seek direct "divine guidance" alone as the ultimate rule of action, then the door is most certainly open to illuminism, requiring God to reveal to us directly and in a detailed manner what His will is that we should do.[88] The *Group* calls this "normal prayer" in which mystical experience is constantly occurring.

Every Catholic knows that God does not, in His ordinary providence, give enlightenment of this kind in conducting the material aspects of life. Even the great mystics, who constantly lived under the influence of God, had to submit their inspiration to the independent control of the Church, ultimately, to insure divine authenticity.[89] Independent control here means not dependent ultimately and solely on "divine guidance" of the same kind. The Church realizes that just as one can be deceived in the reception of an inspiration so also can another be deceived in the reception of an inspiration guaranteeing authenticity of the first.

Independent control to MRA means submitting one's inspirations to one's own judgment or the "guidance" of the *Group*. But whether one bases his discernment of authenticity upon his own fallible judgment or upon the fallible judgment of a group of men makes little difference. In either case the same fallible judgment, based ultimately and solely upon the same kind of "divine guidance" becomes the guarantee for certitude. "Divine guidance" itself is ulti-

[87] *Ibid.*, pp. 442-443.
[88] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

mately then the only authentication for "divine guidance."[90] And the adherents of MRA blindly dance around the edge of this vicious circle, not realizing the grave dangers involved! The Catholic, on the other hand, has "... precise and subtle rules for judging them [inspirations]"[91] which the Church, the infallible guide in the religious life, has laid down. Where such infallibility is lacking there is the grave temptation to fill up this void with substitutes.[92]

4. RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENTISM

Another error that one can deduce from the principles of MRA is religious indifferentism. Intentionally or not, the *Group* inculcates an attitude towards traditional religious bodies whereby an evaluation is more subtly insinuated than expressly taught. We are told that the movement does not make any judgment upon the validity of the various religions in the world today, nor does it propagandize in favor of any.[93] Everyone must practice MRA discipline; and this will, in turn, make him a better member of whatever religious organization he belongs to.[94] It matters little what organization this actually is or whether one belongs to any such organization at all![95] Thus, even those who are atheists, as long as they act (it is supposed) as if there were a God in carrying out the moral teachings of the *Group,* are considered to be doing all that is necessary.[96] This attitude

[91] *Ibid.,* p. 67.

[92] *Ibid.*

[93] *Ibid.,*p. 53.

[94] See Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 4.

[95] *Ibid.,* pp. 190-191: "... people of every creed and no creed, of every race and background find here the essence of truth, something they all accept and say, 'This is better than anything I have known before. It works'."

[96] Cf. Paul Campbell, *How to Begin* (London: Moral Re-Armament, 1953), p. 7: "The universal experience is this, that as we begin to put right what we can, a new power is released in us which cuts through pride.... The formula is simple. Listen honestly. Write it down. Carry it out. The results are undeniable. For everyone, every-

becomes especially clear in the light of MRA's thoughts on religious history. The great religious institutions are merely dogmatized versions of the pure fundamental message of Christianity given to the early Christians whose leadership was under the direct "guidance" of the Holy Spirit and no mere human agency. The *Group* considers itself the return to this primitive Christianity.[97] This has far more reaching implications than religious indifferentism, which implications will be discussed in the next chapter.

Is this not in theory and practice religious indifferentism? If the emphasis is upon action, "vital Christianity," does it really matter what one believes? Bishop Suenens has put it very well:

> The almost inevitable effect of moving on a level that envisages only action, is to imbue people with the idea that truth in religious matters is inaccessible or relative; or at any rate that this truth, supposing it could be found, has not the vital importance we attribute to it, since according to MRA, life can be built without it.[98]

(C) The Absolute Moral Standards

The "four absolute moral standards" is the second great moral principle of MRA.[99] These constitute the generic moral norm, and play an important part in the process of "change" and in the reception of "divine guidance."

In achieving conversion to *Moral Re-Armament* a guide is given to the will whereby it may gauge its action. Whatever does not pass the test of such a guide must be repudiated as sinful, for the guide itself constitutes the epitome

where, whether with faith or no faith, it works. It is tried, tested and true. It has never been known to fail."

[97] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 14. See also Professor Theophil Spoerri, *Basic Forces in European History*, ("The College of the Good Road Lecture Series," Los Angeles: 1950), n. 3, 9, 12, 24-28.

[98] Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

[99] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

of the entire moral life,[100] the irreducible minimum.[101] The power of such a norm in attaining complete "change" is its absoluteness. This absoluteness engenders a total conformity of every act of life with the "four standards." A relative norm would be too elastic, according to the movement, permitting the will to act independently with regard to certain areas of moral life, to retract itself from the totality of commitment which the *Group* requires.[102]

The primary condition for the reception of "divine guidance" is the giving over of one's life entirely to God.[103] Such a "surrender" of oneself to God is achieved by the actual application of the "four absolute standards" to one's own whole activity.[104] And thus the practice of these norms becomes the *conditio sine qua non* of "guidance." But besides being the antecedent requisite for this illumination, the moral standards themselves are, in turn, dependent upon "God-control" in their very application.[105] As we shall see, the "moral standards" are for the most part only the general norms of morality. They constitute only the moral imperatives; they do not establish the particular way in which one is to act according to them in concrete cases. Therefore, in order to discover whether a course of action in some particular case is in conformity with the "four standards," one must often resort to direct "divine guidance."[106] This is especially true in the process of conversion where the prospective convert must often seek to find out from God the occasions where his actions have been deficient. Of course, the same mode of action is to be used throughout one's entire life.[107]

[100] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

[101] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.

[102] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[103] Cf. Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 58: "... so you turn over your life to God, for full and complete direction as a fellow-revolutionary."

[104] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[105] *Ibid.*, pp. 73-76.

[106] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[107] *Ibid.*, p. 77.

The "standards" also constitute a "check" on the genuineness of divine "illumination." If such communications do not conform to these norms, they are not from God. But whether they conform or not is again determined by "divine guidance."[108]

Absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute love, absolute unselfishness, these are the four "absolute moral standards."[109] They have been elaborated upon, but the elaboration itself still leaves them in the majority of cases too abstract:

> "Absolute honesty indicts our consciences for all lies, big or little, all addition to truth, all attitudes adopted to make us appear better or worse than we are. Honesty excludes fraud, material wrongs, and debts; the breaking of promises, mental reservations, neglect of duty in professional, family or civic matters. Absolute honesty destroys our illusions about ourselves, our pretences and dissimulation.
>
> Absolute purity indicts all thoughts, acts, looks, all reading or day-dreaming contrary to God's commandment for our emotional life, whether we are married or not.
>
> Absolute unselfishness indicts all self-centeredness, all preoccupation with the part we play; all concern for other people's opinion of our knowledge and capacity, our qualities or faults; all egotistical or prideful mental reckoning of the services we give or of those we receive; all personal interest directed towards family, national, or professional matters.
>
> Absolute love indicts all hatred, ill-will and contempt, all jealousy and fear, all irritation and indifference; and all the difficulty we find in revealing ourselves to others, in breaking the ice, in making our interest in people greater than common usage permits, and farther-reaching than what is thought 'decent.' "[110]

[108] Supra, p. 45.

[109] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

[110] Suenens, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7, citing a pamphlet called *The True*

(D) Sin

The *Group* recognizes the existence of sin, but its recognition of it is inadequate. "Sin," the *Oxford Group* puts it bluntly, "is anything which keeps us from God or from one another."[111] It is very logical that we find such a concept of sin in the *Group*. Not only has unity in action and purpose always been a primary consideration in MRA thought but also unity of principle:[112] "Union is our instant need. Division is the work of human pride, hate, lust, fear, greed. Division is the trademark of materialism."[113] Thus a neglect of the principles which are the basis for concerted action, such as not practicing the "four absolute standards," and anything which would keep us from God, from His necessary, "divine guidance," from the unity of His sole leadership ". . . as the guide of our individual lives, and so of our national life,"[114] would be wrong and "sinful." Outside of His unifying control by giving us His plan, God does not seem to enter much into their understanding of the real malice of sin as an offense against the divine Unity itself.[115] In fact, God takes on a wholly secondary and subservient role in determining "sin," not only because the moral "messages" of "divine guidance" are authenticated by purely human thought and desire—"divine guidance" is its own determinant—but also because there is no recourse to His entire moral Revelation or to the Church in its inter-

Guide by a group of Swiss writers which includes Dr. Fournier, Spoerri, and M. Mottu. This is the most complete attempt at establishing a moral code that I have been able to find in *Group* literature. Even so it is extremely deficient, especially in matters of purity and justice. It is comparable to the standards as given in Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, chapter III, pp. 32-42.

[111] *What is the Oxford Group?* by the Layman with a notebook; with a Foreword by L. W. Grensted (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 19. See also Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

[112] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[113] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

[114] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

[115] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-43.

pretation in determining these "sins of division." The movement emphasizes its own principles; consequently, the moral principles embodied in the whole of Revelation and in moral theology take on an entirely secondary function. Carried out to its logical conclusions, such a concept of the malice of sin, consisting as it does, in its mere divisive effects on unified action would lead to all kinds of aberrations. If God has sole leadership, is it not traitorous to rely upon what the *Group* considers human authority in religious matters, such as they would consider Papal authority? If the threat of communism must be averted by united action based upon "fundamental" religious principles, would it not be "sinful" to insist upon doctrinal teachings, however truthful they may be, which would set one apart from this common endeavor? If an individual is leading a life of sin in an invalid marriage, for example, should we not overlook this, not insist upon the application of morals here if the unity of the family group is at stake? One might, however, say that just the opposite is true, for the movement requires its members to "change" and apply moral principles to their lives. This may be true with reference to those principles one must apply to his moral life in order to insure concerted action and in carrying out social responsibilities; but in those areas where the application of moral principles does not have a bearing upon one's social life, or does not contribute to basic unity of action, or which does not have universal appeal, such as the complete interpretation of the Catholic Church in matters of morals and ecclesiastical law,[116] there does not seem to be the same necessity nor urgency of application.[117]

Such deductions do not, however, seem to correspond to MRA's official attitude towards organized religions. It seems it wants its members to live their own religious beliefs and follow the directives of their own religious superiors.[118] And

[116] Cf. Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 11: "Any idea limited to one class, race or nation is too small to unite the world. It is divisive."

[117] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.

[118] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

yet, the fact that the morals of those who oppose MRA are impugned, indicates a tendency on the part of the *Group* to inculcate, by its attitude, a hostile feeling in the member, who is an adherent to a religious group, toward their Church leaders, whenever these issue adverse rulings.[119] Clark points out that the unofficial attitude of a movement, such as this, has always been scornful of organized religion.[120]

However, there is also another aspect to this "sinful divisiveness" which is related to changing others and changing the world. Anything which separates us from others, inasmuch as it prevents us from converting an individual, or prevents an individual from converting, is considered by the *Group* as wrong.[121] Thus sin ranges from the slightest act of unfriendliness up to the total neglect of the "moral standards" and "divine guidance." And if one does not conform entirely to these norms, he has not found "... a relevant place in the world,"[122] for the morals of MRA are oriented to world influence, to "change" the world by changing individuals. We are asked the question: "can the wills of men be captured for a positive, uniting purpose —a purpose which will free men and nations from the threat of dictatorship by a man, a group or a class?"[123] The *Group* emphasizes the fact that "change" according to their moral principles is the sole unifying force in the world.[124]

[119] Cf. Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 66: "Moral Re-Armament cannot be honestly opposed on intellectual grounds because it is basic truth. MRA is built on incontrovertible moral truth, whose effectiveness, wherever it is applied throughout the world, cannot be gainsaid. So opposition ... always comes from the morally defeated ... those who refuse to accept this challenge attempt to justify their refusal by criticism. It is pure bluff."

[120] See Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-114.

[121] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, Chapters V, VI and VII, pp. 51-69.

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[123] *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

[124] Cf. Buchman, op. cit., p. 166: "Union is the grace of rebirth. We have lost the art of uniting because we have forgotten the secret of change and rebirth. Moral Re-Armament is the good road of an ideology inspired by God upon which all can unite."

Personal morality is then gauged accordingly as it promotes or does not promote social unity. In fact, it would almost seem that personal morality has no existence outside of this relationship to the social. There are a great many attitudes of mind and habits of action which, if not removed from the personality, have a disunifying effect upon one's public relations. Therefore, a particular use of the mind, the body, and the will deviates from the path of moral uprightness because it tends to destroy united action in family, national, and international life.[125] Sexual perversions, for example, become wrong because they disrupt family unity, are the instrument of communist infiltration, and detract from social responsibility.[126] The same aspect is used to determine the morality of all actions.[127] One would certainly desire a clearer presentation of the real malice of sin. Needless to say, in all of this, there is no distinction made between imperfection or venial and mortal sin.

A catalogue of "sins" thus established is prone to a great deal of subjective preference. Buchman himself has led the way. Hear him speak of the use of tobacco and alcoholic beverages:

> I don't tell anybody else not to drink. Anybody can do anything he wants. Everybody has the liberty of the Spirit.... It's exactly the same with smoking.... It is amazing how these—I won't call them sins, I just call them nice little vices—can sometimes be the key to a man's whole life.[128]

(E) "Sharing" of Sins

There remains for us to consider in this chapter the teaching of MRA on the "sharing" of sins. This "sharing" has a twofold function; to bring into the open with the aid of

[125] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-31.

[126] *Ibid.*, pp. 23-25: "A man's personal defeats have everything to do with his public leadership."

[127] *Ibid.*

[128] Buchman, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-254.

another one's own sins for the purpose of having them forgiven by God,[129] and as a means of inducing another to "change." This latter application is called "sharing for witness."[130]

"Sharing" certainly has its psychological value. To unburden oneself before another gives the feeling of release and relief that a person has finally gotten that off his chest. But it is not clear just how sins are forgiven. The *Group* does not say that it or its members can forgive sins. There are indications that one is left to his own devices, either to pray indirectly to God for forgiveness or, for a Catholic, to go to confession. In fact, in the eyes of the *Group,* confession to a priest is perfectly licit for the whole process of "sharing," and beyond a doubt Catholics influenced by the movement do just that.[131] The "sharing" of delicate sins is done of course in private with an individual of the same sex.[132] But however much the movement tries to protect its members from the dangers of such a practice, there nevertheless arise tendencies toward exhibitionism. One is oftentimes required to bring up his sordid past to aid another to convert, and this according to his own "divinely guided" judgment.[133] The danger of making mistakes, not only with regard to moral questions, but also in reference to indirect scandal cannot be overlooked nor lightly set aside.

(F) "Conversion"

We have already considered the technical side of the

[129] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

[130] *Ibid.*, p. 70. See also Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

[131] With reference to the forgiveness of sins the *Group* teaching on "restitution" must be considered. See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 72. Of course, among those of whom we must ask forgiveness, first of all, is God, as Buchman himself did at his own conversion. See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 168. It would thus seem that the official attitude on the subject is asking God directly for forgiveness.

[132] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 72. See also Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[133] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

process of conversion in the first chapter. It remains for us here to treat of the dogmatic aspect of "change."

There are indications of a kind of Christology in the speeches of Buchman, a Protestant consideration of the redemptive act. Among the many references to the redemptive value of the sufferings of Christ, the following are probably the most pointed:

> (1) It needs this stronger dose. Sin leaves us with such a dull, heavy thud. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." That is the discovery everyone is looking for. That is the answer.[134]
>
> (2) MRA first of all goes straight to the fundamental problem—it recognizes sin. Sin is the disease. Jesus Christ is the cure.[135]
>
> (3)) You must have that emphasis on morals plus the saving power of Jesus Christ.[136]
>
> (4) The woman speaker spoke about the Cross of Christ, of the sinner and the One who had made full satisfaction for the sins of the world.
>
> "A doctrine which I knew as a boy," says Frank, "which my Church believed, which I had always been taught and which that day became a great reality for me."[137]

Thus it would appear that Buchman considers the sufferings and death of Our Lord as the efficacious source of our redemption. Nothing, however, is mentioned of the divinity of Christ and, therefore, it would seem that we will not find an orthodox doctrine of the redemption in MRA; and since no mention is made of it, can we not conclude that the divinity of Christ is of little importance in the eyes of the *Group?* It is apparently of little importance as long as one uses the power to "change" which Christ gives us.

[134] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

[135] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

[136] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

[137] A. J. Russell, *For Sinners Only* (London:2 Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), pp. 57-58.

But in whatever capacity Buchman has placed the redemptive merits of Christ in the process of conversion, the act of justification itself ("change") is a mere matter of "experience." And this is more precisely ". . . personal religious experience."[138] Hear Buchman describe his own "experience" of "change":

> The woman's simple talk personalised the Cross for me that day, and suddenly I had a poignant vision of the Crucified.
>
> With this deeper experience of how the love of God in Christ had bridged the chasm dividing me from Him, and the new sense of buoyant life that had come, I returned to the house feeling a powerful urge to share my experience.[139]

The necessity of this "experience" for conversion was made universal by Buchman:

> You will do well to read the fifty-first psalm. It is a tremendous human experience. And then read in the New Testament about the Cross of Christ. You will never, never, never come into this experience until you know the Cross of Christ. Some of you have heard about it, Sunday by Sunday, but it's not an experience.[140]

Thus Buchman's "experience of the Cross" as the mode of justification classified *Moral Re-Armament* essentially among those revivalistic movements so common in modern sectarianism.[141] It is something of the will, of the emotions, an "experience" of, as Begbie puts it in describing Buchman's conversion, ". . . a wave of strong emotion, rising up within him from the depth of his estranged spiritual life"[142] When asked by Begbie if he had any physical sensations, Buchman replied:

[138] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
[139] A. J. Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
[140] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
[141] Infra, p. 89.
[142] Harold Begbie, *More Twice-Born Men* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1923), p. 25.

> I remember one sensation very distinctly; it was a vibrant feeling up and down the spine, as if a strong current of life had suddenly been poured into me. That followed on my surrender. No; it came at the same time. It was instantaneous.[143]

We must not, however, imagine MRA as indulging in the emotional fanaticism so common among other revivalistic movements.[144] "Change" takes place in the *Group* in a very quiet manner, with no great external manifestations of emotions. In fact, the movement frowns upon such shows of emotion. Although an "experience of the Cross" is necessary for "change," the emphasis is placed upon carrying out this "experience" in action according to the principles of the *Group*.[145]

[143] *Ibid.*

[144] The author was assured of this by the leaders and members of the *Group* with whom he had occasion to discuss the movement.

[145] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

CHAPTER III

THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF *MORAL RE-ARMAMENT*

We have set forth up to now and proven the so-called supernatural nature of the principles of *Moral Re-Armament.* It will be our purpose here to show what specific kind of Christian religious movement it is, and, finally, whether it is a sect in the full and strict sense of the word.

(A) Is MRA a So-called Supernatural Society?

The member of the *Group* does not look upon *Moral Re-Armament* as an organization or society of any kind: " 'It [*MRA*] is not an organization you join.' "[1] And again: "It [*MRA*] stands for a common denominator of immediate constructive action for everyone, above . . . creed, point of view or personal advantage."[2] The basis for the above assertion by the member is, of course, the teaching of the movement on "divine guidance." MRA is a vital group of people, claiming to receive direct "divine guidance" and power from God. It claims, therefore, to need no temporal leader nor temporal organization in which one man or a group of men exercise authority over others. All authority is exercised upon the member directly by the Holy Spirit through guidance, either his own or someone else's. Hence the Holy Spirit has the "new plan" of which the group speaks and coordinates and organizes the varied actions of members by revealing directly to them what He wants each to do to realize this entire plan.

Why is it necessary then, the members ponders, to have any kind of organizational system when all the authority necessary—superior to any human authority—for valid ac-

[1] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 196 quoting Admiral Byrd.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

tion is the inner liberty of "divine guidance,"[3] when all direction comes not from any human source but from the Holy Spirit? "Many have been waiting for a great leader to emerge. The Oxford Group believes that it must be done not through one person, but through groups of people who have learned to work together under the guidance of God."[4] Thus it is to the group that God reveals His complete and sure plan: "The inspired plan for the settlement of a problem, personal or national, may be given to one person, but it is to a group of people committed to obedience that the fullest wisdom comes."[5]

Such being his idea of the movement, it is difficult to see why the ordinary member is not at all surprised at the operational apparatus MRA has to carry on its work. How can the member overlook the great organization *Moral Re-Armament* has set up, with a governing body and all the rest, and the actual exercise of authority over the *Group* by a small number of leaders, irrespective of the source of that authority? Whether the right to tell someone to do something comes directly from God or not, it, nevertheless, is given and exercised by the individual or the group. Therefore, just as the prophets of old did not speak for themselves but spoke in the place of God, so does the *Group* also consider itself to be prophetic.[6] But *Moral Re-Armament* fails to realize that even if it were true that God were the direct leader and gave direct commands, nevertheless, the *Group* will be the recipient of such commands and would therefore be vested with the authority of God to propose such "messages" and demand by that same authority that they be carried out. The *Group* itself speaks of such a leadership as we have just described.[7] And this is exactly that by which an organization and society are constituted.

Irrespective of the desires of the *Group,* it does, thus,

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 41.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 39.
[5] Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.,* pp. 48-49.
[6] See Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 40.
[7] *Ibid.,* p. 29.

have an organizational system with real spiritual power from God (they believe) exercised over subordinates using the means offered by MRA to achieve a common end. It is in fact a society. Society is defined as " '. . . the union of several men for the purpose of attaining the same end by common means.' "[8] It is interesting to note that the exercise of authority is a practical necessity to insure unity of joint action and proper selection of means to achieve the end of the society.[9] This would be especially applicable to the *Group,* for "divine guidance," being individual, could get out of hand, destroy unity of action, and even, perhaps, become schismatic. The leaders of the *Group* realize this and are trying to control it. To what extent they actually have put controls on this, consider the following quotation from *Remaking Men*:

> . . . every relationship, possession and plan under the authority of a Superior Will. This means giving up the right to have the last word on his family, work, money, time and energy. This becomes true when fellow-revolutionaries are given the facts on all these points and their guidance is sought and heeded.[10]

(B) Is MRA a "Christian" Religious Society?

We have already treated of the nature of the common means which MRA affords its members to achieve the end of the *Group.* They are Christian, at least in the sense that they are considered to be Christian by Protestants, in as much as their teachings are based in some manner upon the teachings of Christ. They claim to have taken their principles from Christianity, primitive Christianity rather, as the first name that the *Group* had would indicate: *A*

[8] Cf. Cavagnis, *Institutiones Iuris Publici,* (Romae: 1906), Vol. I, Lib. I, 23, quoted in Ottaviani, *Institutiones Iuris Publici Ecclesiastici*: (Vatican: 1935), Vol. I, 35: " 'Plurium hominum unio ad eundem finem communibus mediis consequendum.' "

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 37.

[10] Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.,* p. 78.

First Century Christian Fellowship. Under the title of the *Oxford Group,* Frank Buchman had this to say about the movement:

> The Oxford Group is a Christian revolution, whose concern is vital Christianity. Its aim is a new social order under the dictatorship of the Spirit of God.... A new illumination can come to everyone and bring men ... back to the basic principles of the Christian faith."[11]

The following is taken from a statement by Buchman concerning *Moral Re-Armament*:

> MRA first of all goes to the fundamental problem—it recognises sin. Sin is the disease. Jesus Christ is the cure.[12]
>
> You will find here the old fundamental truths.[13]
>
> You must have that emphasis on morals plus the saving power of Jesus Christ. Then you experience the dynamic which is almost forgotten—the Holy Spirit, that gives the guided answer.[14]

Or again:

> If this [MRA] is America's answer, then we are in a global effort to win the world to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Then the great truths of the Gospel will once more become great and Jesus Christ will be King. There is your ideology. It is the whole message of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.[15]

There is no need to go further to prove that the *Group* is a Christian religious society. Can there be any doubt that the principles, the common means to attain the end of MRA, are an interpretation of Christian revelation?

Besides taking principles from what is commonly considered to be a source of divine Revelation, namely the

[11] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 141.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

Bible, the *Group* also makes the "messages" of direct "divine guidance" supernaturally revealed norms of actions:

> At the first Whitsun God spoke to a group of ordinary men. They changed the course of history. May He not today have a plan which can solve the problems of a troubled world?
>
> The Holy Spirit is the most intelligent source of information in the world today. He has the answer to every problem. Everywhere where men will let Him, He is teaching them how to live.[16]

(C) The End of MRA as a "Christian" Religious Society

The end towards which the *Group* strives is not as Christian as the means themselves are. These principles are supposed to have originated in God, but it is not at all clear just what part God is to play in their application. Is MRA theocentric, is God the end towards which we must strive, the end of all human life and activity; or is it anthropocentric, does it merely consist in perfecting man and mankind to insure peace, happiness, and temporal prosperity? Is it, at length, merely a kind of humanism? It is extremely difficult to determine which it is. There is a constant almost unconscious transition from the ". . . religious to the worldly,"[17] almost as if to set an inevitable cause and effect pattern. Buchman himself speaks in the same breath of ". . . the dictatorship of the Spirit of God . . ." and ". . . better human relationships, . . . unselfish co-operation, . . . cleaner business, . . . cleaner politics."[18] And the close connection between the practice of MRA discipline and direct material successes appears the more evident the more one enters into a study of Buchman's speeches and other *Group* literature. By reason of emphasis, it would almost seem as though MRA were trying to set up a temporal messianism

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[17] Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
[18] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

by diverting spiritual powers into an entirely mundane purpose. During an address to the Second World Assembly for *Moral Re-Armament,* on July 22, 1934, Buchman said:

> We will find our national security only in Moral Re-Armament. Moral Re-Armament will become the keynote of world reconstruction. The choice is "Guidance or Guns." We must listen to guidance or we will listen to guns. The choice is between a vortex of fear and a pageant of triumph.[19]

And again in 1952 he said:

> We are in the midst of the breakdown of our civilisation—war in the home, war in industry, war between the nations. What is the future? Further disintegration, chaos, anarchy and dictatorship? Or the birth of a new society brought about by a revolutionary change in human nature? The Holy Spirit is the most powerful force in the world today.[20]

This world which Buchman desires to build for his followers is one of great wonders:

> Three great tasks confront this generation. To keep the peace and make it permanent. To make the wealth and the work of the world available to all and for the exploitation of none. And with peace and prosperity as our servants and not our masters, to build a new world, to create a new culture and change the age of gold into the Golden Age.[21]

Such stress upon worldly joys as the result of good action, and even as its sole motivation, subtracting exaggeration in making the movement attractive, does not seem to be worthy of the high ideal of "vital Christianity" which the *Group* proposes. It is more akin to a vital humanitarianism. But be that as it may, there is at least an expected causal link between the practice of virtue and temporal prosperity.

[19] *Ibid.,* p. 99.
[20] *Ibid.,* p. 198.
[21] *Ibid.,* p. 86.

Certainly, as Catholics hold, God does not guarantee earthly peace and happiness for the practice of virtue, unless it would be that interior joy we experience from doing what God wants us to do. But the external circumstances whereby the world at large may afford a good living Christian a wealthy felicity are not at all guaranteed by God. Christ Himself suffered terribly because of His environment, and certainly He practiced virtue in its highest degree.

Compared to the Catholic belief there is a lacuna, an empty space, in MRA teaching on virtue and its reward. The Catholic believes the first premium set upon virtuous living is not external tranquility with one's surroundings, but the promise of eternal life and internal peace and trust in God in the face of calamities and reverses. Of this interior peace He assures us all; but He also promises us His cross, which He gives us to bear according to our strength.[22]

The Catholic knows that evil and its consequences will always be present to an extent in the world. This does not mean that we should not do all in our power to avert and diminish sin and all the suffering which follows upon it; but we must not be deceived that the world will ever be totally without them: "The world is still partly, as the Master told us, under the dominion of the devil and the forces of evil. It bears the weight of original sin and of men's personal sins."[23] And just as this world was a cause of grief and suffering for our Blessed Lord, so shall it also be for us.

I do not wish to leave the impression that the *Group* never speaks of saving souls; but it would seem to be primarily concerned with saving civilization: "Upon a foundation of changed lives permanent reconstruction is assured. Apart from changed lives no civilisation can endure."[24] Thus repentance and change are sought in order to make a better

[22] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 64.
[24] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

world instead of engendering a greater love of God in and for Himself. Such stress upon over-optimistic material results of proper Christian action will always lay the *Group* open to this criticism. It would do well to present the true relation of virtue to temporal happiness, instead of the exaggerated version it has presented up to the present time.

MRA is, then, an organization, a Christian society based upon revealed principles, primarily to attain temporal peace and prosperity. It claims to be something vital, living, productive of individual and collective moral perfection and endowed with the gift of direct "divine guidance":

> Leaders everywhere now say that the world needs a moral and spiritual awakening. A lot of people say it.... But it is still just *words*. The problem is *how*. It seems to me that most people who feel the need for awakening are confronted with the difficulty that faced me twenty years ago: how to bring it about—how to get the disciplined action on the part of the many.... Now I find when we don't know how, God will show us if we are willing. When man listens, God speaks.... We are not out to tell God. We are out to let God tell us. And He will tell us.[25]

(D) Is MRA an "Enthusiasm"?

This claim to supernatural prerogatives, what Knox calls "ultra-supernaturalism,"[26] places the *Group* among those tendencies known as "enthusiastic" movements. Msgr. Ronald Knox has laid down the principles for the definition of "enthusiasm," as he is wont to call such movements, in a book of some six hundred pages.[27] We do not propose to burden the reader—or ourselves—by setting down every last characteristic of such a movement. It will be our sincere attempt here to arrange in proper order the essential elements involved in every "enthusiastic" movement and

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[26] See R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 2.

[27] *Ibid.*

those accidental concomitants which are present in MRA but not necessarily present in every other historical "enthusiasm."

Msgr. Knox would rather call this "enthusiastic" tendency "ultra-supernaturalism" because this second term encompasses within its etymology all the notes which comprise a definition of "enthusiasm."[28] In order, then, to understand what an "ultra-supernaturalism" is we must first of all consider what would be the essential features of a simple "supernaturalism." This latter would certainly be strictly doctrinal, based, let us say, upon what would be called God's ordinary supernatural providence and influence (including a public revelation that is complete and defined doctrinally).[29] In such a supernaturalism private revelations would be extraordinary, the content of belief and the norm of conduct being authoritatively defined and complete.

"Ultra-supernaturalism," as the prefix implies, demands, on the part of God's ordinary providence, a greater supernatural influence in man's life (including personal supernatural revelations), and a more rigid acceptance and application of this influence on the part of man. It shuns religious truths which are authoritatively defined and seeks to know the will of God only by direct revelation. Man must go directly to God for knowledge of His will and the grace to carry it out. It would also seem that "ultra-supernaturalism" requires a man to excel (without distinction) in getting to heaven and expects some kind of progressive revelation:

> He [the enthusiast] sees what effects religion can have, does sometimes have, in transforming a man's whole life and outlook; these exceptional cases (so we are content to think them) are for him the average standard of religious achievement.... He has before his eyes a picture of the early Church, visibly penetrated with supernatural

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] See Knox, "The Group Movement: Second-hand Impressions of Buchmanism," *The Clergy Review*, (1933), 266.

> influences; and nothing less will serve him for a model.[30]

Thus the term "ultra" in "ultra-supernaturalism" has three notes in its connotation: a message beyond ordinary supernatural Revelation, divine influence beyond ordinary supernatural providence, practical ascetism beyond the ordinary obligation of Christians.

Let us treat of the last of these first because the logic of the "enthusiast's" mode of thought begins here with his experience of conversion, for out of this process there arises (so they tell us) a new man with "a new set of faculties, and also a new status."[31] The "enthusiast" "expects more evident results from the grace of God than we others."[32] What is needed, he believes is the discipline of the primitive Church—although there seems to be very good ground for proving that Christian Antiquity was not "the mirror of Christian perfection"[33] that we have been led to believe by "enthusiasts." It is required of the members of such a movement to carry out to the utmost what appears to them to be "angelic purity"[34] and "apostolic simplicity"[35] to the extent of abandoning earthly amusements and vanities entirely, and, in this, destroying the distinction between counsel and precept, classifying as "sinful" every unnecessary and frivolous indulgence.[36] Nor does the "enthusiast" stop here; he teaches this "more perfect" way [this concept of it] as if it were of universal obligation upon Christians."[37]

Msgr. Knox continues:

> Meanwhile, it must not be supposed that the new birth which the enthusiast preaches can be limited to a mere reformation of manners. It involves a new approach to religion; hitherto this has been

[30] See Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.*, p. 2.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] Knox, "The Group Movement: Second-hand Impressions of Buchmanism," *op. cit.*, p. 267.

> a matter of outward forms and ordinances, now it is an affair of the heart. Sacraments are not necessarily dispensed with; but the emphasis lies on a direct personal access to the Author of our salvation with little of intellectual background or of liturgical expression.[38]

Therefore, the exercise of intellectual and aesthetic virtues, which were considered to have habituated the mind to the rarified atmosphere of lofty religious thought, is viewed with a disdain born of unencumbered simplicity of religious approach.[39] There is more emphasis on an emotional and mystical approach in devotional works;[40] the soul looks upon an interior experience of peace and joy as its guarantee of righteousness and the proper attitude of those conversant with God.[41] Such a religious tendency engenders an anthropocentric delight; man becomes more concerned with his own perfection than with God, more with his own salvation than with the glory of God.[42]

This reborn man is endowed with "a new set of faculties which are proper to his state."[43] He is now under a divine influence beyond that of the ordinary supernatural providence of God—direct power (grace) and guidance. At every turn he expects to be confronted with the divine will directly communicated to him, provided he puts aside failing human wisdom: "That God speaks to us through the intellect is a notion which he may accept on paper, but fears, in practice, to apply."[44] Thus "saved" man would like to assume authority in the community convinced that he possesses an understanding of the will of God hidden from his unregenerated fellow man. Seeing from his van-

[38] Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.*, p. 2.

[39] *Ibid.*

[40] See Knox, "The Group Movement: Second-hand Impressions of Buchmanism," *op. cit.*, p. 267.

[41] See Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.*, p. 2.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *Ibid.*

tage point the conflict between human wisdom and his own assurance of the divine will, he rebels, at least inwardly, at purely human authority, submitting to it only with reluctance. Who besides himself has a "real mandate to exercise authority?"[45] The logical and often historical outcome of this position of the "enthusiast" is the establishment of a theocracy, "in which the anomalies of the present situation will be done away, and the righteous bear rule openly."[46]

The "ultra-supernaturalism" of the "message" of the "enthusiast" is as varied, perhaps, as the interpretation of "divine guidance" is. Thus among "enthusiastic" groups and even among the adherents of the same movement the range of diversity may be as extensive as the groups and the members themselves. The "enthusiast," then, does not only oblige others to a better life, but also takes the determinant of that better life, the content for achieving it, from what he considers to be the sure direct revelation of the Holy Spirit.[47] He thus also requires a revelation over and above that already given to many by God. Needless to say, this content may or may not correspond with the deposit of faith and its infallible interpretation by the Church with regard to moral principles and their application. Nor does this divine light merely illuminate moral acts; it may also become "the sole arbiter of action."[48] Certainly reason loses its function "as a guide to any sort of religious truth."[49]

In order to facilitate the comparison with what constitutes an "enthusiastic" movement and *Moral Re-Armament,* let us list now in a briefer manner these same essential notes which we have been trying to establish: (1) "Enthusiasm" requires a higher quality of life to be universally practiced, a higher perfection, as a constant demand, than we ordinarily find or are so seriously obliged to;

[45] *Ibid.*
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 156.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

(2) it claims for itself the prerogative of special direct divine guidance and power; (3) it desires to revert to primitive Christianity, in the discipline of which it is convinced these first two things are to be universally found, but which have become "outgrown with neglect";[50] (4) it promotes, by emphasis at least, direct access to God in saving our souls; (5) it defines an experience as the assurance of righteousness; (6) it is anthropocentric; (7) it claims to possess a new authority and leadership; (8) it desires to establish a theocracy.

And now we will attempt to classify, according to the same numerical order, the traits of the *Group* which correspond to the different elements of "enthusiasm": (1) It requires greater perfection of life. There really is no need to prove this by any particular text; it runs throughout all the speeches of Buchman—"the world needs a moral and spiritual awakening . . . disciplined action on the part of the many[51] . . . a Church aflame. . . . The Oxford Group believes that the ordinary person can do the extraordinary thing if he is in touch with God. . . .[52] God can put thoughts in your mind. . . . Absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, absolute love."[53] And again:

> I cannot go into all the qualities necessary for a revolutionary this morning. There were some people in the Acts and the Gospels who gave everything. There were others who did not give everything. . . . I want to ask you . . . whether you want to be that kind of a revolutionary. If so, there may be a comfortable place for you behind the lines. But somewhere on the battlefront we will have the real revolutionaries.[54]

Of course, we often exhort people to accept for themselves

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[51] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[53] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

higher standards of Christian living; and the sincerity with which the "enthusiast" actually does this is extremely edifying. But oftentimes, according to Catholic principles, he goes too far in requiring, as MRA does, extraordinary mystical prayer as the ordinary constant function of the spiritual life of every individual. This excess is also very evident when the movement does not at all distinguish between what is of command and what is of counsel, looking upon both as of equal obligation, and laying them upon the shoulders of every individual as such. The ordinary man is obliged to become the extraordinary mystic.[55] The counsels are the normal obligations of the spiritual life.[56]

(2) The fact that MRA claims for itself direct guidance and power has already been sufficiently proven. We will add here one more quote from *Remaking Men*:

> Change in human nature requires the receiving of power from outside the personality. The turning point of a man's life comes when he decides to accept that directing and saving power from outside himself.
>
> The remaking of a man is not a matter of self-effort, or pulling on one's own bootstraps, but of opening the shutters of the mind and heart in a time of silence to a new direction and the power that accompanies it.... To pull the switch is the operative act in lighting a room. To be silent and to listen is the operative act in transforming a man's character.... Light and power come to men when they are silent.[57]

We have already pointed out that reason, circumstances, the Bible, and the *Group* itself are beginning to play a part, and we have described the part they actually are playing,

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 198.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 163: "An extreme of evil must be met with an extreme of good. A fanatical following of evil by a passionate pursuit of good." See also Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-79.

[57] Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

in the process of discovering the will of God.[58] Let it suffice here to reiterate that, irrespective of the domain which these may or may not have taken over, direct illumination still plays the active and important part in MRA teaching on discovering the divine pleasure.[59] It is the old problem of reason and personal inspiration. Here reason is debilitated and given a wholly secondary role, or more often than not no role at all. This is especially true when we hear of the *Group* seeking direct guidance (and claiming to receive it) as to when it should hold its World Assemblies;[60] or

> Insight into a business operation, people to write to, what to say, thoughts about the country, an assurance of God's love and power, perspective for the problems I have to face, vision for the day's opportunities. . . .[61]

(3) What we have said of the "primitive Christianity" of the movement pertains here.[62] Although the *Group* does not raise up this banner as much in public as it did before, especially when it was known as *A First Century Christian Fellowship,* nevertheless, none of the doctrines and practices which were considered to have made up that primitive Christianity have been radically changed by MRA.[63]

(4) Certainly the *Group* has no cult, no sacramental

[58] Supra, pp. 49-53.

[59] Cf. Knox, *Enthusiasm,* op. cit., p. 577: "Excellent advice; but your enthusiast, is he capable of profiting by it? The Bible, what a weapon to put into such hands! Chesterton said wisely, it was no use a man's reading his Bible unless he read everybody else's Bible. . . . The voice of circumstance is hardly less treacherous. . . . Small comfort to the energumen; reason may be quickly dethroned, under the label of intellectual pride. . . . In the long run the issue is between some kind of authority and unrestrained private judgment." Certainly the ultimate appeal to authority in the *Group* is "divine guidance" which is considered to be "adequate."

[60] See Suenens, *op. cit.,* p. 66.

[61] H. Kenaston Twitchell, *How Do You Make Up Your Mind?, op. cit.,* p. 13.

[62] Supra, p. 81.

[63] Supra, pp. 13-17.

system, no "outward forms and ordinances."[64] It seems peculiar that a movement so necessary that it is "the one hope of the world"[65] does not include any of these things in its teachings. Would it not appear almost as if MRA did not consider these as essential and necessary? In the Introduction to *Remaking the World,* Alan Thornhill makes these pertinent remarks:

> . . . Frank Buchman . . . comes with a message of trenchant simplicity, backed by a sensitive understanding of human nature and by an ever-relevant experience of the transforming power of Christ. . . . The truths he utters . . . are simple; but they are the truths by virtue of which the world may come to salvation and sanity in our lifetime or for lack of which our civilisation may perish.[66]

If these are the truths that bring salvation to the world, what need is there of the rest? And even though they do not deny the existence of other truths, they, nevertheless, in principle and practice by emphasis, deny their essential relevancy for salvation. We can go to God directly in prayer; He comes to us directly in prayer with His guidance and power.

(5) We have already treated of the "experience" of "change" in the *Group* concept of justification. Again let it suffice here to add another quotation from Buchman:

> We haven't begun to experience the spiritual revolution we need. You need revolution, and then when you come into the clear light of God's Presence, you will experience a glorious renaissance.[67]

(6) Man is presented more as the end of religious action than God. The *Group* is interested in making "new men,

[64] Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.,* p. 2.
[65] Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 147.
[66] *Ibid.,* p. xx.
[67] *Ibid.,* p. 142.

new homes, new industry, new nations, a new world."[68] And all of this is accomplished by changing men:

> Hostility piles up between nation and nation, labour and capital, class and class. The cost of bitterness and fear mounts daily.... Is there a remedy that will cure the individual and the nation and give hope of a speedy and satisfactory recovery? The remedy may lie in a return to ... simple home truths.[69]

This theme is repeated over and over again throughout the literature of the movement. There is much preoccupation with man's peace and salvation and little concern for God's glory.

(7) The basis for this new authority and leadership is the possession of a new and superior wisdom. Buchman inaugurated an address in Visby, Sweden, in 1938, by saying: "we meet as guided people, and our final source of authority is God's plan."[70] It is this revelation of "God's plan" to an individual or a group of individuals that constitutes this new leadership:

> Thousands of ordinary people across the world are learning obedience to God's control. They are forming a new public opinion which demands a new quality of leadership. Such leadership can only come from men and women who speak with authority—an authority based on daily experience of the guidance of God.[71]

This leads directly and logically to their (8) desire to establish a theocracy: "It is to a group of willing men and women that God speaks most clearly. And it is through God-controlled people that God must one day govern the world."[72] And again: "Moral Re-Armament will be the focal point for the new national unity where God is the constant and final arbiter in every conflict. A truly united nation comes from a directing God."[73]

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[69] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

In order to classify MRA most accurately and give it its proper specification as an "enthusiasm," we must consider one more point. It results from a distinction made between what has been designated as mystical and evangelical "enthusiasm."[74] The former is concerned more with the Divine Presence within the individual, transcending the concept of grace, and using the Incarnation as its type and inspiration; the latter has more to say about the redemption of man, being conscious of his sinfulness, and desirous of freeing man from sin and making him "a new creature in God's sight."[75] The mystic is much more inclined, then, to direct divine guidance and power (the inner light), and thus has little to do with theology,[76] and looks askance at the intellect with its human learning.[77] The evangelical accepts the Bible rather than the inner light "as the ultimate source of theological certainty."[78] But it is his own interpretation of the Bible. His disdain for learning is less acute than the mystic's.[79] And because he is less demanding for guidance, the evangelical oftentimes is more demanding for miracles, i.e., extraordinary manifestations at conversions.[80]

If we were to place MRA into such a division, we would rather place it among the tendencies of mystical "enthusiasm" because of its emphasis on divine guidance and power whence proceeds the authority to act.[81] It disdains extraordinary emotional manifestations in its adherents, being a kind of refined revivalism, and looking upon great shows of emotion as in decidedly bad taste.[82] Human wisdom is not held in very high repute. In fact the *Group* considers it to have failed; but "... amid the failure of human wisdom,

[74] See Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.*, p. 581.
[75] *Ibid.*
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 583.
[77] *Ibid.*, p. 586.
[78] *Ibid.*
[79] *Ibid.*
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 587.
[81] See Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
[82] Supra, p. 71.

there is still one Supreme Source from whom all can draw new power, new hope, new illumination."[83]

Among the accidental factors of "enthusiasm" which happen to be present more or less as tendencies in MRA are the following: (1) The subjective certitude of being right because of the special direction of the Holy Spirit.[84] In the *Group* this tendency shows itself not only in that the "final source of authority is God's plan"[85] but also in its attitude towards opponents of the movement: "Moral Re-Armament cannot be honestly opposed on intellectual grounds because it is basic truth.... Those who refuse to accept this challenge attempt to justify their refusal by criticism. It is pure bluff."[86] (2) There is a tendency to emphasize liberty of the spirit which naturally tends to conflict with ecclesiastical authority.[87] The *Group* has recognized this and attempted to offset it by encouraging members of religious organizations to obey the directives of their religious superiors, although the principles of MRA, carried out to their logical conclusions, leave no place for any authority except that coming directly from God. The aim of the movement is "to restore God to leadership as the directing force in the life of the nation."[88] What more is necessary (they believe) when "the Holy Spirit... gives the guided answer and tells you exactly what to do as a clear direct call from God?"[89] (3) The sacraments are wont at times to be brought implicitly into disrepute.[90] This tendency in the *Group* would again be the result of direct divine influence. What need for sacraments, external signs, when man can approach God interiorly in spirit and receive direct

[83] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
[84] See Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.*, p. 18.
[85] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
[86] Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
[87] See Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.*, p. 20.
[88] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 140.
[89] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[90] See Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.*, p. 21.

help.[91] We do not say that this disdain is explicitly present in the movement; we merely say that it is present by implication. (4) "Enthusiasts" have been known to treat lightly the occasions of sin and temptation, considering themselves, perhaps, immune because of their more perfect life from any contagion.[92] One wonders if this same attitude is not present in the *Group* with regard to "sharing" of sins.[93] And certainly logic leans (5) toward preference of the layman, given divine wisdom, over the most learned of religious instructors in imparting spiritual counsel.[94]

Thus MRA has all of those qualities, at least in principle, which belong to that general type of religiosity that has appeared during various periods of history and which has been designated as "enthusiasm." The *Group* forms, then, with other "enthusiastic" movements "roughly, a common type."[95]

(E) Is MRA a Non-Catholic Sect?

We have yet to consider, however, in a more precise manner, whether MRA is a sect, and whether, in view of the preceding, it is an "enthusiastic" sect.

Algermissen has defined a sect as

> . . . every separatist ecclesiastical movement, based upon religious individualism, which conflicts with the truth and unity of the one true Church, and goes its own way as a separate entity. So far as such a movement departs from the truth of the Church of Christ, it is heresy; so far as it offends against the unity of the Church, it is schism.[96]

[91] See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

[92] See Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.*, p. 104.

[93] Supra, p. 68.

[94] See Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.*, p. 114.

[95] Knox, "The Group Movement: Second-hand Impressions of Buchmanism," *op. cit.*, p 268.

[96] Algermissen, Konrad, *Christian Denominations*, trans. Rev. Jos. Grundner (New York: Herder Book Co., 1948), p. 83.

We might call this definition "static" because it treats of sect as it is in its completed form.[97] Algermissen gives another definition which we might rather label "dynamic," in as much as it describes the essential development of a sect from its inchoative particularist attitude up to exclusive particularism of doctrine and members—all this in opposition to the whole truth and universality of the Church.[98] It may begin without any intention of separating from the Church, or for that matter, without any conscious doctrinal antagonism. Jansenism certainly can be considered as such,[99] and it would seem that every "enthusiastic" movement began in much the same manner:

> It had never been their [the Waldensians] intention to set up a separate Church, any more than it was Wesley's intention, during his lifetime, to secede from Anglicanism. To be a leaven within the lump, to be an enclave of holiness within the corrupt body of Christendom, was the aim of either movement. But the logic of facts was against them. The enthusiast always begins by trying to form a church within the Church, always ends by finding himself committed to sectarian opposition.[100]

We could very well include *Moral Re-Armament* in this statement. It has no intention of being a separatist movement. The *Group* merely desires to restore vigor to the churches, to enhance our "primary loyalties."[101] "Our faith must be illumined, must have light," Buchman says speaking of "divine guidance," " so different faiths, all faiths, need this supernatural gleam.... And this light needs absolute moral standards."[102]

Let us see, then, whether this dynamic definition can be

[97] *Ibid.*
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] See Knox, *Enthusiasm, op. cit.*, p. 206.
[100] *Ibid.*, p. 109.
[101] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[102] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

predicated of MRA. First of all, every sect must have a fundamental individualistic character in contradistinction to the universal truth and unity of the Church.[103] It, therefore, must have a radical heretical and schismatic quality, which demands faith on the part of the adherent, a separatist tendency, not necessarily the chief pre-occupation and ultimate aim of the religious group. When, however, this individualist striving does actually become the essential feature and objective of such a community in actual opposition to the universality of the Church, then is the sect, in its fundamentally completed form, born.[104]

Does *Moral Re-Armament* have this basic heretical and schismatic quality?

> A heretic, as the word indicates, is someone who makes a selection in the revealed message, who chooses to suit himself what truths seem vital, or else adds errors of his own invention.[105]

MRA is selective with regard to divine revelation by reason of its emphasis upon what it considers to be essential Christianity:

> MRA is the triumph of a God-given thought. It came as the answer to a crisis that threatened civilisation. A re-emphasis of old truths was let loose in the world—simple home-spun truths . . .—the guidance of God and a change of heart.
>
> Everyone agreed that these truths had to be recaptured, relived and restored to authority—truths which, were they practised, would bring the answer.[106]

And again:

> A new illumination can come to everyone and bring men and women of every creed . . . back to the basic principles of the Christian faith.[107]

[103] See Algermissen, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
[104] *Ibid.*
[105] Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[106] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[107] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

And again:

> ... people of every creed and no creed, of every race and background find here [in MRA] the essence of truth.[108]

Moral Re-Armament is also inventive with regard to divine revelation by reason of its teaching on "divine guidance." It makes extraordinary mystic experience the normal prayer of ordinary people, and bypasses the authority of the Church in determining the obligations and truth of such communications, which may or may not correspond with the Revelation entrusted to the Church and her infallible interpretation of it.[109] Therefore, the *Group* also tends to become schismatic, besides being heretical.

Thus is expressed in the movement a fundamental individualistic attitude. But MRA explicitly rejects the idea that it is an adversary of the Church; it denies no doctrine, although it does not explicitly endorse all the truths of the Catholic faith (but the fact that it neither states the universal necessity of these truths nor encourages universal acceptance of them is tantamount to denying their necessity and relevance); it does not desire to set up a rival religious body. That is what the movement protests, but this does not seem to be what the movement means. How can we say that MRA has no explicit argument with the Church in the realm of Revelation when Buchman makes the following statement:

> We want to be careful that every single person in this room knows the full truth in Christ Jesus that has been revealed to us....
>
> Great truths have been revealed to us. I think of those wonderful days in California ... when we spoke to the world and we gave a message that is the answer. It is a great ideology. It is the *full message of Jesus Christ.* It is putting the message in a way that the world will understand. People didn't fully understand, but the crisis was

[108] *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.
[109] Supra, p. 54.

> not as imminent as it is today. Now people everywhere say this is the answer.
>
> . . . we are in a global effort to win the world to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Then the great truths of the Gospel will once more become great and Jesus Christ will be King. There is your ideology. It is the *whole message of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* The message in its entirety is the only last hope that will save the world. God's chance is a revolution under the Cross of Christ that can transform the world. The only hope. Our only answer. Go forth with that message united and you will save the world.[110]

Up to this point the only worthwhile revolution we have heard of is that of the *Group;*[111] up to this point the only adequate answer spoken of is that given by the movement;[112] up to now the only message has been that of MRA,[113] the only successful ideology, that of *Moral Re-Armament.*[114] We are now told that this message, this answer, this revolution, this ideology is the "full message of Jesus Christ"[115] presented in an understandable manner. It is the mark of a sect to take the part for the whole.[116] Does it not seem, to say the very, very least, that MRA has done just that here? The fact of the matter is that the *Group* wants a "new" revelation. We are told repeatedly that God has a plan, a "new" plan, for us, as if the "old" plan was of no further effective use: "We have not yet tapped the great creative sources in the Mind of God. God has a plan, and the combined moral and spiritual forces of the nation can find that plan."[117] And again: "Direct messages come

[110] Buchman, *op. cit.,* pp. 147-148. Italics mine.

[111] *Ibid.,* p. 4.

[112] *Ibid.,* p. 170.

[113] *Ibid.,* p. 7.

[114] *Ibid.,* p. 140.

[115] Supra.

[116] Cf. Jos. Casper, *Sekten, Seher, und Betrüger* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verlag, 1953), p. 14: "Die Sekten . . . deuten, sprechen und handeln vom Teil wie vom Ganzem."

[117] Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 48.

from the Mind of God to the mind of man—definite, direct, decisive. God speaks.... God has a plan for the nations. Nations are searching for a whole new experience of truth."[118] This is a serious stand indeed. It is tantamount to saying that the Church and its proposal of Revelation are a thing of the past; God has a new dispensation—*Moral Re-Armament.*

Is not the *Group* schismatic, actually, by trying to establish the "dictatorship of the Spirit of God,"[119] making individuals answerable to God directly as to the exercise of spiritual authority? And does it not usurp supernatural spiritual authority by setting itself up as a supernaturally revealed religious movement, by not submitting its credentials to the only religious society with supernaturally revealed authority in the world, the Catholic Church? In this regard it is also interesting to note Buchman's concept of the church. "I believe with all my heart in the Church," said Buchman at Mackinac Island in 1943, "the Church aflame, on fire with revolution."[120] From this statement alone we could not, perhaps, deduce that Buchman had reference to an invisible universal church. In fact, Buchman mentions the term so little that it is difficult to ascertain whether he means individual visible religious organizations or something intangible. It is only when he speaks of the church and churches in a comparative manner that we can determine his mind on the subject. In a speech on August 9, 1939, he said: "What we must have is a world-wide Christian front against the oncoming forces of materialism. We read of burning churches. The only answer to burning churches is a Church aflame."[121] He speaks of a common Christian front and seems to link it up with a (one) dynamic church, which, in turn should be world-wide. This is distinct from the churches as places of worship, true; but the intimation here is that the churches belong to individual distinct religious societies from which the

[118] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[119] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[120] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[121] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

"church aflame" would also be distinct. If Buchman did not mean a universal and consequent invisible church, why did he not say *churches* aflame instead of "Church aflame"? Certainly Buchman does not mean one individual visible church here, for his programme is for all the churches. "That's the program for the Church today,"[122] Buchman said speaking of the message of MRA. Therefore, he is making reference to a church not represented by any organizational religious body, but an invisible intangible something. This church almost seems to be identified with MRA itself since it is not an organization under a visible leadership (in its own eyes), and has the least common denominator for religious Christian union: "It [MRA] stands for a common denominator of immediate constructive action for everyone, above . . . creed. . . . It means . . . God's guidance . . . [and] honesty, purity, unselfishness and love."[123] The testimony of other leaders and members of the movement would seem to verify this.

R. H. Murray in his book, *Group Movements Throughout the Ages*,[124] traces his concept of movements under the direction of the Holy Spirit since the time of Christ. Our Saviour, he asserts, did not found a visible Church with a hierarchical system but "the Church grew into an institution, with all the merits and demerits of institutionalism."[125] This institutionalism often becomes deficient in supplying for the contemporary spiritual needs of the people, "and some men and women are moved to alter or modify the institutionalism they have inherited by adding to it something [prophecy] which they find it lacks."[126] (Compare this with Buchman's statement: "These [guidance and the four standards] are the additions to our Christian practice that need furbishing and burnishing. These need to be

[122] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

[123] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

[124] R. H. Murray, *Group Movements Throughout the Ages* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1935).

[125] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[126] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

activated.")[127] The Montanists substituted the prophetical order for the hierarchical system and lived by "free inward impulse. For the inflexible system of form and ritual they substituted the free and spontaneous exercise of spiritual gifts in the church-fellowship."[128] However, Montanists made their spiritual guidance a new law thereby denying the progressive nature of revelation.[129] Thus the group shows itself from time to time in "the Franciscans [perhaps he means the Fraticelli], the Friends of God, the Port Royalists, the Methodists, the Evangelicals, the Tractarians, and the members of the Oxford Group."[130] The value of this study of Murray is enhanced very much by the statement of L. W. Grensted in the foreword of the book:

> The story which Dr. Murray tells in his last chapter has had the very great advantage of being read by Dr. Buchman himself. I heartily hope that it may also be an encouragement to many to read Dr. Murray's book, and to learn from it into how great a heritage the Group Movement of today has entered.[131]

In a lecture given in and later published by the *College of the Good Road,*[132] Professor Theophil Spoerri expressed the same view; MRA is based on inner guidance and not on external authority expressed by an institution; leadership rests directly and solely in the hands of God not in a person or institution; this leadership comes to the individual from within, not from without.[133]

Alan Thornhill, in a pamphlet entitled *The Significance of the Life of Frank Buchman,* says the following:

> It [MRA] is an answer both to the Individual-

[127] Buchman, *op. cit.,* p. 189.
[128] Murray, *op. cit.,* p. 38.
[129] *Ibid.,* p. 41.
[130] *Ibid.,* p. 15 (In the Introduction).
[131] *Ibid.,* pp. ix-x (In the Foreword).
[132] Professor Theophil Spoerri, *Basic Forces in European History* ("The College of the Good Road Lecture Series," Los Angeles, 1950), No. 3.
[133] *Ibid.,* p. 26.

> ism and to the Totalitarianism of our age.... Moral Re-Armament is the homeward march of humanity. After four hundred years of wandering farther and farther in the desert of Individualistic Materialism, it is modern man's rediscovery of the Promised Land. It calls him once again to a way of life and a form of society in which everything comes under the control of God.
>
> This does not mean going back to anything that has existed in the past; that is impossible. But at the same time Frank Buchman's work has close kinship with all the great spiritual movements of the past. Its earliest name was "A First Century Christian Fellowship."[134]

In what appears to be a more official publication we find the following:

> "[the *Group* is] the marching Church of Jesus Christ effectively at work.... Its workers are drawn from the various branches of the Christian Church.... The simple Christian experience of salvation . . . has enhanced their loyalty to the Church of their birth, giving them a new and a personal understanding and love of its doctrine and a new eagerness to draw upon its sacramental and other means of grace.... While the Group shares fully in all the body of doctrine common to Christians, it may also be said to have been charged by God with the re-emphasis of certain aspects of Christian truth which, though present in Christianity from the first, have been widely neglected."[135]

Therefore, the *Group* desires to bring back the fundamental truths of Christianity, primitive Christianity, which, to its way of thinking, excludes a visible Church in principle, divinely constituted, with final authority and leader-

[134] Alan Thornhill, *The Significance of the Life of Frank Buchman* (London: Moral Re-Armament, 1952), pp. 7-8.

[135] J. P. Thornton-Duesbery, *The Oxford Group: A Brief Account of Its Principles and Growth* (London: 1947), quoted in *The Oxford Group and Its Work of Moral Re-Armament* (London: Lowe and Brydone Ltd., 1954), pp. 35-37.

ship in religious matters. Their church's final authority is God's plan directly communicated to the individual, not given to him through the visible Church of Christ. And this is the only chance civilization has: "Moral Re-Armament offers the world the last chance . . . to change and survive, to unite and live."[136] Compare this view with the stand of Catholic teaching on the subject:

> They [Catholics in public life] should be leaders in the warfare that civilization must wage today if it would survive. The terrifying influences of evil that are so vehemently attacking modern society can be effectively opposed and overcome only by the grace and spiritual strength that are communicated . . . to mankind through the Church of His Divine Son, the Catholic Church.[137]

We might also add to this, as Fr. Connell goes on to explain, moral instruction in obligations and duties.[138]

And thus there has arisen a new "enthusiastic" sect in our midst despite its protestations to the contrary. Where MRA, however, fits in more precisely in the history of "enthusiastic movements," we will attempt to discover in the following chapter.

[136] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

[137] Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.SS.R., *Morals in Politics and Professions* (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1951), p. v (in the Introduction).

[138] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER IV

THE PROTESTANT INFLUENCES IN MORAL RE-ARMAMENT

In the preceding chapter we tried to classify *Moral Re-Armament* according to its religiosity; we tried to place it in a religious family with which it has a definite resemblance and inheritance. We would now like to limit the genealogy of the movement further; to trace it down to its more immediate parentage. First of all, we would like to treat of those general aspects of Protestantism which are the *Group's*; then we shall turn our attention to the more proximate ideas which influence Buchman, and indirectly through Buchman, the leaders and members of *Moral Re-Armament.*

We must not be surprised to find a good deal of what is Protestant in the *Group.* In fact, the contrary would be most surprising. Frank Buchman himself was at one time a Lutheran minister.[1] A number of the leaders are Protestant ministers of various denominations. The majority of the members are Protestant. Is it any wonder then that the atmosphere of the movement is Protestant?[2] Nor does the *Group* alleviate this condition to any great extent. The theological conviction of the recruit, if he has one at all, is not changed by MRA through any formal theological training in the strict sense of the word. He is taught the discipline of the movement, nothing else.[3] And yet even though his convictions are not explicitly condemned, perhaps, they are placed in the background because of the essential necessity of the message of MRA, which, as we have seen is itself of Protestant origin.[4] Nevertheless, the convictions of his particular church do seem to crop up almost unconscious-

[1] Supra, p. 4.
[2] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
[3] Supra, pp. 21 ff.
[4] Supra, pp. 79 ff.

ly in the mind of the member. This is especially true since the *Group* assures us that it desires to enhance our primary loyalties (church included), and thus there is a tendency on the part of the individual to shade the terminology of the movement into a pleasanter and more acceptable hue. Thus also the theological content of such words as Church, redemption, Holy Spirit, guidance, etc., will vary, perhaps, between Catholic and non-Catholic. But we must always keep in mind that the *Group* itself has given these terms a definite if nebulous theological content as we have seen in the second and third chapters. Instead of trying to suppress such a confusion of thought, the movement seems to promote it, unconsciously perhaps, by trying to be all things to all men. *Moral Re-Armament* would like Catholics to accept approximately the following: "MRA is not a Protestant sect, but an ethical and spiritual discipline, which takes from Catholic practice of meditation and quiet time its ideas of guidance."[5] And "... generous Moslems, Hindus, Socialists and Protestants are at the same time working to make their respective groups accept similar conceptions of MRA as an expression of their own noblest aspirations."[6]

We say that this occurs, perhaps, unintentionally on the part of the *Group*. And it is not difficult to understand why. MRA does not attach itself and, therefore, reduce itself to any denominational body of belief already in existence. It is neither Catholic, nor Lutheran, nor Calvinist, nor Methodist, nor Baptist, nor Anglican, etc.[7] The movement considers itself above religious bodies.[8] It is to serve as the vital catalytic agent: "Our faith must be illumined, must have light. So different faiths, all faiths, need this supernatural gleam.... And this light needs absolute moral

[5] *Tablet* (London), June 19, 1954, p. 591. From a letter by Sir Arnold Lunn.

[6] *Ibid.*, August 14, 1954, p. 162. From a letter by Edward Voigt, who was active as a whole-time worker in MRA.

[7] See Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

[8] Supra, p. 72.

standards."[9] Being superior then because it is "vital Christianity" the *Group* does not look upon itself as partaking explicitly in the diverse tenets of different creeds. The diversity of such religious beliefs itself would be enough to demonstrate the movement's reluctance to embrace them since unity in principles is of such high standing in MRA.[10] Thus the "ultra-supernaturalism" of the *Group* expresses itself again in that the movement is beyond the religious bodies because of its vital and universal principles and life.

(A) The Protestant Parent of MRA

Is there then no form of Protestantism to which we may say the *Group* owes its peculiar origin as a sect? It would seem because MRA does correspond in essential lines to what Knox considers to be an "enthusiasm" that we will find its Protestant ancestors in the Protestantism of "enthusiasm":

> Generically, then, Buchmanism falls into the category of those spiritual revivals—Montanism, Quietism, Jansenism within the Church; Anabaptism, Quakerism, Methodism outside it—for which I have been bold to coin, elsewhere, the name 'ultra-supernaturalist.' It is not, primarily at least, by any doctrinal innovation that such movements claim the credit, or incur the stigma, of originality; rather, it is because they preach, whether in devotion or in morals, a 'more perfect' way as if it were of universal obligation upon Christians. In matters of devotion, they will have none but a mystical approach; sacraments, forms, ceremonies are meaningless for them; the use of human reason is transcended, whether in the act of faith which leads to 'conversion,' or in the purely contemplative prayer which is the normal exercise of the believer.[11]

[9] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

[11] Knox, "The Group Movement: Second-hand Impressions of Buchmanism," *op. cit.*, pp. 267-268.

It would be beyond our scope here to treat in detail these various movements in historic Christianity which were "enthusiastic"; and it would be too great a digression to trace the sources of "enthusiasm" as Msgr. Knox has so very well done. Let us rather turn, after having denoted as briefly as we have the family line of the *Group,* to the immediate form of "enthusiastic" Protestantism which bestowed its likeness more proximately and exactly upon *Moral Re-Armament* through the mind of Frank Buchman, its founder.

To analyze a man's actions in order to discover his thoughts and their origin is a very difficult task, especially when these actions are formulated only after years of thinking and experience. We are speaking, above all, of the content of such concepts and whence they came. How much the Lutheran pietism of Buchman's youth, or the traditional "enthusiastic" evangelism as expressed in the Keswick Convention (during which his conversion took place), for example, immediately influenced his teaching cannot be accurately measured. It is not to be supposed here, of course, that these had no bearing upon Buchman's doctrinal and technical development. Certainly all of these produced in him a tendency toward practical religion, a lay concept of religious organization, personal piety over doctrinal soundness, universal priesthood, divine guidance,[12] and all those things which, in effect, constitute what we have described approximately as "ultra-supernaturalism." But it is not certain, in all cases, how much these influenced his thoughts with regard to doctrinal teachings.

Is there, however, a point or points of contact in the history of Buchman's life and a corresponding development in his teaching whereby we may say with a great degree of certitude, here is where he received his ideas or the direct impetus for his ideas? We have already mentioned what would be approximately the *Group's* appeal to Catholics because it protests that it is deriving its principles

[12] See Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-122.

from certain orthodox teachings of the Catholic Church.[13] Thus we see the importance of establishing as nearly as possible the origin of the doctrine and practice of the movement.

We have already considered what is meant by the "enthusiastic" trend. We have already shown the *Group* belongs to it. But in the movement itself we find this traditional "ultra-supernaturalism" enhanced by a methodology as influential upon doctrine as it is upon technique, a methodolgy called evangelism. In fact, we might even say that the immediate forerunner of MRA was the "enthusiasm" of evangelism developed and practiced in the colleges and universities of America before 1923; and that the *Group* belongs to the "enthusiasm" of the modern evangelistic school.[14] In order to be able to do this it is necessary to arrive at a definition of modern evangelism.

But can we arrive at such a definition at all? How true are the words Edwin Hughes quotes indicating that evangelistic literature has been prone to vagueness.[15] In the number of volumes on the subject which we consulted there was almost a numerical correspondence of different definitions of evangelism. Oftentimes one author would stress method as John R. Mott,[16] or content as Samuel Zwemer;[17] there were authors who differed on method and content, some who insisted that scholarship[18] should have precedence over practice.[19] It almost seems as though there is no uniformity. Zwemer lists any number of definitions of evan-

[13] Supra, p. 102.

[14] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

[15] See Edwin Hughes, *Evangelism and Change* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1938), pp. 9-10.

[16] See John R. Mott, The Larger Evangelism (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury Press, 1944), pp. 9 ff.

[17] See Samuel M. Zwemer, *Evangelism Today* (London: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1944), p. 7 (in the Foreword).

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

[19] See Harold Begbie, *More Twice-Born Men* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1923), pp. 6 ff.

gelism, no two of which are identical.[20] John R. Mott wrote in *Evangelism for the World Today*: "Even after reading thoughtfully the many definitions of evangelism, the final impression is one of the inability to express adequately the height and the depth of all that is involved in this God-given undertaking . . . the inability to arrive at a common mind. . . ."[21] Mott lists 122 definitions of evangelism by different men, none of which are exactly alike.[22] There are, however, two essential notes upon which most seem to agree, namely, that evangelism involves a message and a method of putting that message across to men.[23]

Since, as we shall see, there is an historical connection between the teaching of Henry Drummond and those of Buchman, let us use the former's definition. Evangelism is "the methods of presenting Christian truth to men's minds in any form."[24] This is an active definition; it denotes convert technique. It denotes a reception of this Christian doctrine, whatever it may be, in the subject to be converted —a successful reception which converts him. Of course, as can be seen, there is a definite relativity here. The methods of presenting these truths and the truths themselves, according to MacIntosh, are relative to the manner in which both the convert maker and the convert can be successfully motivated—the convert maker because they must propel him to make conversions, the convert himself because they must elicit from him conversion.[25] Drummond's definition of what he calls the "New Evangelism" differs from the above definition of evangelism in that it is "the particular substance and form of evangel which is adapted to the pres-

[20] See Zwemer, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-18.

[21] John R. Mott (ed.), *Evangelism for the World Today* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1938), p. 5.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 11-105.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Henry Drummond, *The New Evangelism* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1899), p. 4.

[25] See Douglas Clyde MacIntosh, Personal Religion (New York: C. Scribner's Son's 1942), pp. 206 ff.

ent state of men's mind."[26] It is the "Gospel for the age."[27] And this brings us to the content of those Christian truths to be imparted. Certainly one can catch more flies with sugar than with vinegar. We know that truth itself is not always pleasant. I would not be much of an advocate of flying if I were to emphasize the terrible plane crashes which have been occuring; most assuredly they hinder some people from traveling by air. And if promoters of air-flight desire to increase the number of passengers, they must not mention such incidents, or when asked, at least put them in gentle language. Thus also the message of evangelism, according to Drummond, must remain Christian but be conducive to proper motivation in convert work. Drummond put the matter more strongly yet when he indicated that religion has lost its vitality because it has not been presented in an impressive form.[28] We do not need a new Gospel, he asserts, the one we have will do very well. What we need is a new form of Gospel, a new theology, a new doctrine, a new understanding of the Gospel in the light of modern conditions.[29] And this new approach to the teachings of Christ must be applied, in turn, according to the very conditions that proposed it in the first place, namely, the mentality of modern man in his environment—a functional message and method of conversion.[30] We do not propose to establish the doctrinal content of the various forms of evangelism here except to say, in general, that they tend to overthrow propositional theology and establish what they consider as necessary and essential Christianity under varied forms.[31]

According to Drummond the need for a new theology is based upon the nature of truth.[32] In other words human

[26] Drummond, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 15, 16.
[30] See MacIntosh, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 209.
[32] See Drummond, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

reason is working towards a better presentation of the Gospel, a more suitable message. And since this new approach to the Gospel must be vital, the emphasis is placed upon moral truths.[33]

The particular type of evangelism with which we are concerned here is that which has been labeled American collegiate evangelism upon which Moody, Drummond, and Wright had an important influence,[34] and with which Buchman was associated, as we have seen in the first chapter.[35] We have reference in particular to the religious nature of the YMCA movement of the early twentieth century.[36] As secretary in the YMCA movement, it was Buchman's duty to promote, among other things, the following aims: "(1) religious meetings, (2) Bible study, (3) personal evangelism, and (4) inter-association visitation and correspondence."[37] Let it suffice to say that the personal evangelism mentioned here involves a decision to give oneself over entirely to Christ, which corresponds psychologically with the *Group* concept of the step of conversion known as "decision."[38]

But it is the concept of personal evangelism of Henry Wright that had the greatest influence upon the teachings and methods of the *Group*.

Henry Burt Wright (1877-1923) was indeed one of the most successful evangelists of his day.[39] A man completely devoted to his life's work, he had the knack of making religion and uprightness glow with attractiveness.[40] He became father-confessor and spiritual guide to all who came in contact with him, eliciting from them by his gentle

[33] *Ibid.*
[34] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
[35] Supra, pp. 22-24.
[36] See Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 126.
[40] See George Stewart, Jr., *Life of Henry B. Wright* (New York: Association Press, 1925), p. 2.

friendliness complete dedication to God.[41] He himself was converted by Dwight Moody in 1898,[42] and together with Henry Drummond had a great deal to do with the formation of the thought of Buchman.[43] We are not going to presume to indicate the influence Moody and Drummond had upon the teachings of Wright except in certain pertinent doctrines. In the first chapter we mentioned, generally, the sources of the *Group's* practice of indoctrination. Here we would like to treat more specifically the particular form of Gospel which Buchman received from his contemporaries.

In conceiving his doctrine of "divine guidance," Wright was influenced a great deal by Drummond and Bushnell. All one need do is read his book, *The Will of God and a Man's Life Work,* to be convinced of that. In order to show Wright's influence upon Buchman's teaching on guidance let us consider a comparison of the following points:

Wright—

> (1) God's will may be known, not only for the rare occasions, but for the ordinary circumstances of life.[44]

Drummond—

> What is the will of God for me today, just now, for the next step, for this arrangement and for that, and this amusement, and this projected work for Christ? For all these he [the Christian] feels that he must consult the will of God, and that God has a will for him in all such things, and that it must be possible *somehow* to know what that will is, is . . . a point in his doctrine and creed.[45]

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] See Clark, *op. cit.,* p. 122.

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] Henry B. Wright, *The Will of God and a Man's Life Work* (New York: The Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1909), p. 119.

[45] Henry Drummond, *The Ideal Life* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1913), p. 308.

Buchman—

> This is a daily possibility for everyone—to listen to God and get His programme for the day.[46]

Wright—

> (2) The failure to understand God's will [is] due to the employment of wrong, or at best only the secondary and contributory, instruments of spiritual apprehensions.[47]
>
> [There are] limits . . . [to] criticism and reasoning processes as instruments of spiritual apprehension.[48]

Buchman—

> Amid the failure of human wisdom, there is still one Supreme Source from whom all can draw . . . new illumination.[49]
>
> We need a fourth-dimensional thinking—a gift from God—that will lighten our darkness and bring a speedy answer.[50]

Wright—

> (3) The universal and particular will of God.[51]
>
> Although God's universal will for the world—His will for character—cannot be fully known; His particular will for each individual—His will for career—may be fully known by that individual, and it is this which we are bidden to know and do.[52]

The universal will of God for the world today, Buchman says, is *Moral Re-Armament*: "It [MRA] is a great ideology. It is the full message of Jesus Christ."[53] And again: "MRA points the way. It is God's answer to this generation."[54]

Wright—

> (4) What do we mean by the particular will of God for the individual man?[55]

[46] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
[47] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[49] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[51] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
[52] *Ibid.*, p. 139.
[53] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 86.
[55] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

Drummond—

> Now this region may be distinguished from other regions . . . by its *secrecy*. It is a private thing; between God and you. You want to know what to do next—your calling in life, for instance. You want to know what action to take in a certain matter. . . . You want to know whether to go into a . . . scheme or not. Then you enter into this private chamber of God's will and ask the private question.[56]

Buchman—

> I am not going to ask you to make a decision right now. The thing you have got to decide is between you and God. Do it alone. Write it down if you want to. It is a deed, like the transfer of property—so you turn over your life to God, for full and complete direction as a fellow-revolutionary.[57]

(5) Wright asks the question: "Does God actually communicate with men to energize and guide them?"[58] He answers the question: "Of the fact of some sort of communication between God and man there cannot be the slightest doubt."[59] God communicates with men's wills by an "irresistible conviction."[60]

In reference to this Buchman says the following: "It [MRA] means the knowledge and exact information that God's guidance brings."[61] And again: "Everyone everywhere can make contact with the source of power and illumination."[62]

Wright—

> (6) Any man . . . may have such assurance with reference to his course not only about great things but also about the little things—every step of his life. Any man *may* have this sure conviction, but before he *will*, two things are essential for the most of us—the receiving instrument must be cleaned,

[56] Drummond, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-279.
[57] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
[58] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[61] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

and it must be made strong in order most fully to receive the communications.[63]

There is even a similarity of metaphor between Buchman and Wright in this: "Any man can pick up divine messages if he will put his receiving set in order."[64]

Wright—

(7) We prepare ourselves . . . [for this by surrender to God by] . . . obedience to the universal will of God.[65]

The human will can be trained and strengthened so that the mind will have greater sensibility in apprehension of conviction. . . . Can we combine the cleaning and strengthening of the human will into one process? Can we set before us some absolute moral standards?[66]

Buchman—

. . . I want to try and show the secret that lies back of this miracle-working power of the living God. . . . If I could sum it up in a sentence—the simple secret is this: individual lives, wholly surrendered to the living God.[67]

How Buchman uses the standards was described in the second chapter. These also strengthen the will in order that a man be more sensitive to the will of God: "You must have that emphasis on morals plus the saving power of Jesus Christ. Then you experience the dynamic . . . the Holy Spirit, that gives the guided answer."[68]

Wright—

(8) How did Jesus find out the will of God for himself? He says that he did *always* . . . the things which were pleasing to God. . . . We are to infer that through this act of his he cleaned and strengthened his will to receive the compelling conviction from God. The result was that he was sure of God's presence and guidance.[69]

[63] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
[64] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
[65] Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.
[66] *Ibid.*, pp. 150-151.
[67] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
[68] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[69] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

Thus Our Saviour practiced absolute standards in His life: purity, love, unselfishness, honesty. The Christian must apply these to his own life if he is to discover the will of God:

> To every probem, great or small, which presents itself—in a small matter like one's bearing in a game of sport, in a large matter like the choice of a life career—the Christian . . . asks himself this question: "Is the step which I had planned to take an absolutely pure one? is it an absolutely honest one? is it the most unselfish one? is it the fullest possible expression of my love? If it is everyone of these four, it must be the will of God for me. If it fails to measure up to any one of these four standards it cannot be God's will. . . . As he holds his instrument of apprehension . . . resolutely to this standard, the Christian is conscious of its becoming strong both to know and to do God's will and there comes the undoubted, the compelling conviction which guides and impels him forward.[70]

Thus Wright adopted the practice of listening to God for communications (convictions);[71] by determined willingness to obey any order that came from God even though he did not know whither God would lead him, he constantly awaited the divine pleasure as to when the conviction would come.[72]

Buchman also describes Christ as carrying out the moral standards and presents these to the Christian to follow: "Absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness, absolute love. Those are Christ's standards. Are they yours?"[73] These four standards are to be employed in discovering the will of God. If what we are about to do does not conform to these principles, it is not the will of God. Thus if we are desirous to do God's will, He, in turn, gives us the light and the power both to know and to do what

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 173.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[73] Buchman, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

He wants. Buchman is even more precise about this illumination:

> The greatest men of our past knew that God-control was the only adequate programme for a nation. Their experience can be our experience. Definite direction, accurate information can still come from the Mind of God to the mind of man. It can come to our nation as men and women everywhere listen to God and obey, as they learn to plot their own course and their nation's course by the four compass points of MRA—honesty, purity, unselfishness and love.[74]

Thus we might show that all the teachings of MRA have their basis in the personal evangelism of Henry Wright; but enough has been said to indicate this.

Anyone giving a comparative study between the doctrine of Buchman as embodied in *Moral Re-Armament* and the teachings of Wright even cursory attention, is struck by the mass of internal evidence pointing to a fundamental, and at times, literal identification. If we were merely to consider this, there would be sufficient evidence to prove proximate and direct dependence. However, there is also external historical evidence, often vouched for by Buchman himself, which proves conclusively the proximate origins of the *Group*.

Because of his work as YMCA secretary at Penn State College beginning in 1909, Buchman had occasion to meet with many of the leading evangelists of the day. Inter-association visitation of various collegiate branches of the YMCA was a common practice, and it was in connection with such events that Henry Wright came to Penn State in the Fall of 1909 to train leaders for the work of the coming year. In this he was associated with and aided by Frank Buchman.[75] In fact, when Wright published his book, *The Will of God and a Man's Life Work,* in that same year, he immediately sent a copy to Buchman, "to whom he had dis-

[74] *Ibid.,* p. 127.

[75] See Stewart, *op. cit.,* p. 72.

patched other Bible-study material from time to time."[76] Incidentally, this is the volume from which all the texts on Wright's teaching concerning "divine guidance" were taken. Buchman had this to say about the book in reply:

> Your book has just come and I am delighted with it. Am introducing it not only in our Senior classes, but am teaching it myself to about a hundred short-course men at a class meeting on Sunday morning at nine. We have them for three months. Think it is admirably adapted to them for daily study. Those pregnant thoughts for each day will make the daily study exceedingly helpful and practical. Have but one regret—that I cannot have you as a normal-class leader, and your suggestions in it. Do you realize (I don't think you can, fully) how you have revolutionized things for us here by that normal class last summer?[77]

A year later, in the Fall of 1910, Wright again assisted Buchman at Penn State in the promotion of evangelism. Conferences and discussions were held on purity, prayer, how to fight campus evils, and the "importance of consecrated leadership."[78] In fact, there were several such campaigns in which Wright and Buchman took part at Penn State.[79]

It is interesting to note in a correspondence that took place about this time, the attitude of Buchman and Wright towards guidance. Buchman writes: "I have been waiting for guidance in reference to your visit to State College."[80] Wright answers: "I can be with you on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.... It seems almost a sure guidance that I ought to come."[81] There is already here an identical dependence on guidance as a basis for decision.

As a teacher at Hartford Theological Seminary, Buchman attended Wright's course at Yale in Personal Evangelism whenever it was possible for him to get away.[82] It is to be

[76] *Ibid.*
[77] *Ibid.*
[78] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 75-83.
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[81] *Ibid.*
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

remembered that at this time also Buchman was made Extension Lecturer in Personal Evangelism at Hartford, an office which carried with it the duties of teaching and actual evangelistic work. He held his position, as we have seen, until 1922.[83]

In September, 1918, Buchman wrote to Wright from China:

> I have used the triangle and the "On top" phrases and also the outline of "Diagonsis" lecture in China, using my own laboratory experiences.... I have always given credit to you.... The triangle has caught all over the Far East.... You, your life, and your message were frequently mentioned at the Kuling Conference. I have just written a friend again today that *much of the best in my message is yours.* I want to retain my own literary honesty and also maintain the high standards that ought to govern men who are collaborating on a given subject.... You come nearer than any other man in the sphere of my acquaintance to the one who actually incarnates the principles of Christ.... The movement has wonderfully caught on in Korea and Japan.[84]

[83] See Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

[84] Stewart, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-223. Italics mine. The triangle, i.e., the triangular theory of prayer is similar to our concept of intercessory prayer, with the exception that the intercessor is always in this world and God communicates, in some manner, how He may help the person interceded for. Cf. Stewart, *op. cit,* p. 223: "'I have prayed that, wherever possible, God would show me how to help my friends and work out through me as far as possible the answer to my petitions.'" Thus the triangle is from God to intecessor to interceded for. *Ibid.*, p. 224: The expression "on top" used by Wright indicated anything which kept an individual from spiritual development and initiative. Sex aberrations, for example. *Ibid.*, p. 223: The theory was based upon the effects drugs had on an individual in attacking the aesthetic and spiritual qualities as their primary effect. *Ibid.*, p. 224: These qualities were considered to be "on top" and, therefore, the first to be destroyed as the issue of sin and abuse. See Campbell and Howard, *op. cit.*, p. 70 and pp. 60-68. Although the terminology is no longer employed in the *Group*, the practices have been retained.

It was at Kuling, China, that Buchman conducted his first "houseparty" during this missionary visit.[85] However, it is not certain that this is identical with the conference mentioned by Buchman in his letter. At that time also, he developed the "five C's" as his method of convert making.[86]

Howard Walter, in the foreword of his book, *Soul-Surgery,* relates that simultaneously with this own writing Buchman and Wright were collaborating on a work concerning the same aspect of personal evangelism;[87] but Wright died before its completion.[88] They received the impetus for such a study into the science of convert technique from Drummond, who prescribed in his book, *The New Evangelism,* a "spiritual diagnosis" of the soul.[89] In it there is not much room given for theoretical apologetics; what is stressed is the "living power of true lives."[90] He sets aside other means of seeking conversion and emphasizes individual action upon individual: "If a man would act upon every other man, he can do so best by acting, one at a time, upon those beside him."[91] Drummond decries the lack of such men and reviews the kind of method which should be adopted:

> Plenty there to preach to us, but who will interview us, and anatomise us, and lay us bare to God's eye and our own?... To take [a person] by himself; to feel his pulse alone, and give him one particular earnest word—the only one word that would do—all to himself—this is the simple feat which we look in vain for men to perform.[92]

Certainly Buchman owes a great deal to Drummond, whom he may never have met, but to whose writings he

[85] See Clark, *op. cit.,* p. 54.
[86] *Ibid.*
[87] See MacIntosh, *op. cit.,* p. 379.
[88] *Ibid.*
[89] See Drummond, *The New Evangelism, op. cit.,* p. 257.
[90] *Ibid.,* p. 257.
[91] *Ibid.,* pp. 258-259.
[92] *Ibid.,* pp. 268-269.

was introduced by Wright, in reference to conversion and convert technique. Buchman most probably got his emphasis on the "changed life" (at least there is a similarity of terms) from him.[93] But it was under Wright that Buchman the disciple learned his lessons well; and it is to Wright that much of the credit for the success of *Moral Re-Armament* should go, for it is through him that the fundamental theory of the movement came.

[93] See Henry Drummond, *The Changed Life* (Philadelphia: H. Altemus, 1898).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

If *Moral Re-Armament* is a non-Catholic religious sect, then Catholics are forbidden to co-operate formally in or become members of MRA.[1] The same would be true even if the *Group* were not a sect, if it were merely a religious movement based on heretical religious principles or if it merely contained dangers to the integrity and purity of the faith.[2] And because it is the explicit practice of MRA to use names and statements, however innocuously and orthodoxly meant, as endorsements to advertise and further its teachings and practice, to consent to this use of such names and statements or their equivalent would be formal moral co-operation, and therefore, forbidden.[3]

Since, however, the *Group* does not as yet have any apparent public cult or worship, there would seem to be no problem with regard to communication in unauthorized public religious services. But if at any time the movement would conduct such ceremonies, active participation in them would be forbidden to Catholics.[4]

However, in an instruction issued by the Holy Office, "De Motione Oecumenica,"[5] a certain participation in conferences and discussions with non-Catholics (among whom we would classify the members of *Moral Re-Armament* since in our opinion they hold their own particular non-Catholic doctrines), has been permitted. The purpose of such endeavors, the manner and degree of such participation in them, has as its end the return of dissidents to the one true fold of Christ—"... that all who believe in Him

[1] See Cn. 1258.

[2] See Prummer, *op. cit.*, pp. 447-448.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] See Can. 1258, par. 1.

[5] See "De Motione Oecumenica," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, XLII (1950), 142-147.

[Christ], 'may be made perfect in one.' "[6] The following points on this participation in so-called "ecumenical" movements are made in the "Instruction":

(1) It is to the bishops of the Church primarily that the work of promoting "reunion" belongs, and it is under their vigilant care that "the twofold end of assisting those, who are in search of the truth and the true Church, and of shielding the faithful from the perils which readily follow in the tread of the movement" must be prudently carried out.[7] Therefore, "priests and lay persons may not engage in this work save by the authorization of the Bishop."[8] A special admonition is given with reference to the observation of the canons on "previous censorship and prohibition of books"[9] in regard to Catholic and non-Catholic publications on this subject.[10] *Moral Re-Armament* considers itself to be a kind of ecumenical movement, a movement of union among Christians; but a union based upon the principles of MRA itself, as universally applicable to all men, which, as we have seen, are contrary to Catholic teaching. This type of union is stressed and taught in MRA publications and thus such publications would come under the rules governing the reading of religious works. We might add that all the works written by leaders and members of *Moral Re-Armament* are written by non-Catholics on topics touching upon matters of faith and morals without the approbation of competent ecclesiastical authority. Such works also contain erroneous doctrinal questions and implicit and explicit dangers to the integrity and purity of Catholic teaching as we have seen in the previous chapters.[11]

[6] "Instruction to Local Ordinaries about the 'Ecumenical Movement,'" *Jurist*, X (1950), 207 (the official English translation of the "De Motione Oecumenica" cited in footnote 5.) Scripture quotation from John, XVII, 23.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[8] Francis J. Connell, C.Ss.R., "An Important Roman Instruction," *A.E.R.*, CXXII (1950), 321.

[9] See Cn. 1384 ff.

[10] See "Instruction to Local Ordinaries," *op. cit.*, p. 208.

[11] Cf. Suenens, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-80.

(2) The method of procedure instituted must include the entire body of Catholic doctrine, proposed and explained:

> Nothing embraced in the Catholic truth concerning the true nature and means of justification, the constitution of the Church, the Roman Pontiff's primacy of jurisdiction and the only real union effectuated by a return of the dissidents to the one true Church of Christ, must be passed over in silence or cloaked under ambiguous language.[12]

This particular point of the "Instruction" has an especial relevancy to *Moral Re-Armament* in as much as it is considered by its adherents to be a kind of ecumenical movement, a movement of union in and by itself, as we have already mentioned. This is not merely a unity of concerted actions, but a unity in principle, in the tenets of Buchmanite "fundamental Christianity," in the principles of *Moral Re-Armament.* Participation in this particular method of "reunion" is obviously forbidden by the "Instruction."

(3) The "Instruction" goes on to set down the conditions under which meetings between Catholic and non-Catholics may be held or approved of by Ordinaries. Although these gatherings, the Holy Office points out, offer an occasion for the spread of Catholic truth among those who generally are not sufficiently conversant with it, nevertheless, there is also furnished the danger of indifferentism. If there is apparent hope of good results, priests suited for and competent in expounding and defending Catholic doctrine should be appointed by the Ordinary to secure the proper direction of such meetings. With reference to the laity, however, the special permission of ecclesiastical authority is required for their attendance, and this should be given only to those who are well instructed in the teachings of the Church and strong in their faith. If it is discovered that no good results can be hoped for, then the faithful should be prudently kept away from them and the gatherings themselves discontinued. Most careful scrutiny is required of the Ordinary

[12] "Instruction to Local Ordinaries," *op. cit.*, p. 209.

if the assemblies are to be carried out on a large scale since the danger to the faith is heightened and the hope of beneficial results is lessened.[13]

(4) Among those meetings with non-Catholics which do not require special permission of ecclesiastical authorities (as set down in the admonition "Cum Compertum")[14] are those in which Catholics and non-Catholics gather, not for the purpose of bringing matters of faith and morals under discussion, but in order to establish ways and means of defending "fundamental principles of the natural law or of the Christian religion against the enemies leagued together against God"[15] or to institute deliberations for the betterment of the social order, etc.[16] It might be well to point out as Fr. Connell does, that the "Instruction" seems to indicate that the principles to be defended or deliberated upon are accepted by all the participants.[17] Such being the case, the liceity of participation here would depend upon the orthodoxy of the principle or principles involved. Certainly then no Catholic could be permitted to co-operate with *Moral Re-Armament,* under the aspect of an "ecumenical" movement or in any other way, by the defense or endorsement of those teachings of the movement which are erroneous as described in Chapter 2.

To sum up:

(1) A Catholic may not become a member of MRA either because it is a non-Catholic religious sect, or because it fosters heresy, or because it contains common dangers to the integrity and purity of the Faith.

(2) A Catholic may not formally participate in the spread of the movement itself nor give it the moral support of endorsement.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

[14] See "Cum Compertum," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis,* Vol. XL (1948), 257.

[15] "Instruction to Local Ordinaries," *op. cit.*, p. 211.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] See Connell, "An Important Roman Instruction," *op. cit.*, p. 327.

(3) Considered in its so-called "ecumenical" nature, Catholics may not enter into such a movement of "re-union" of Christians based upon the false religious principles of MRA and whose end is not a return of dissidents to the Catholic Church.

(4) A Catholic may take part in a movement of "re-union" *with Moral Re-Armament* (not *of Moral Re-Armament*) just as with other non-Catholic religious groups, if the Ordinary of the place would so judge it advantageous and without danger to the Faith, in accordance with the conditions set down in the "Instruction," and the decisions of the Holy See.

(5) A Catholic may take part in meetings *with* MRA (not *of* MRA) as also with other religious movements, if they are conducted for devising means for defending orthodox principles or for deliberating on how to better the social order, etc., if the Ordinary of the place would so judge it advantageous and without danger to the Faith, in accordance with the conditions set down in the "Instruction," and the decisions of the Holy See.

With regard to participation in the *Group,* only the French Hierarchy has permitted even a guarded type.[18] To show that there is no contradiction here we must consider the decision of the French Bishops in more detail.

Certain French theologians, representing the Bishop of Lausanne and Fribourg in Switzerland, where the European center of MRA is located, ". . . claiming that the norms issued by the Holy Office were merely directives, undertook to establish certain safeguards so that Catholics could participate in MRA without scruples."[19] A list of eight points was drawn up as a condition *sine qua non* for the presence of Catholics at meetings, on the further condition also that the Holy See would permit it.[20] With regard to these points,

[18] Infra, p. 124.
[19] Noa, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-23.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 23.

a "Gentleman's Agreement" was reached with MRA, which amounted to non-infringement on the mission of the Church.[21] Thus, following the advice of the Bishop of Fribourg, a certain restricted participation in good works was permitted. This agreement, however, was later repudiated by the *Group* because of strong adverse criticism.[22] In this way the one attempt to participate with MRA in good works resulted in failure because the *Group* demanded that any work accomplished be carried out solely on its principles.[23] We have seen that a Catholic can neither accept nor act upon these principles.

The attitude of the French Hierarchy in demanding certain conditions be fulfilled for Catholic participation points out the fact that all agree that MRA decidedly harbors at least positive dangers to the integrity and purity of the faith. There is no disagreement, then, in principle, in the official attitude of the hierarchy throughout the world with regard to the *Group*. It is in complete accord with the conditions determined by the Holy See for Catholic and non-Catholic participation in good works. The fact that this cooperation failed and the reason why it failed convinces us more and more of the heretical and schismatic nature of MRA and of the dangers involved in any type of participation in any way.

[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

APPENDIX

The history of the hierarchical appraisal of the movement began in England in 1938, when *Moral Re-Armament* was still known as the *Oxford Group*. His Eminence, the late Cardinal Hinsley, Archbishop of Westminster, had this to say of the movement:

> "The group movement is so tainted with indifferentism, with the error that one religion is as good as another, that no Catholic can join it to take any active part in it or co-operate with it formally."[1]

On the assumption that perhaps the nature of the *Oxford Group* had changed under its new title of *Moral Re-Armament*, the movement was again examined by the Hierarchy in 1946:

> The following statement was drawn up at the October meeting of the Hierarchy of England and Wales, and now has been circulated to the clergy of the respective dioceses:— " 'Moral Re-Armament.' —This movement is so tainted with indifferentism, with the error that one religion is as good as another, that no Catholic can take any part in such a movement, or formally co-operate. Catholics should be warned not to attend their meetings or gatherings, even as spectators."[2]

According to the Rev. Clement Tigor, S.J., this was still the attitude of His Eminence Cardinal Griffin and the Hierarchy in 1954.[3]

In Germany, His Eminence Cardinal Frings, Archbishop of Cologne, mentioned the following in a sermon on Whitsun, 1950:

[1] *The Catholic Herald* (London), March 11, 1938, as quoted in Suenens, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

[2] *The Tablet* (London), Dec. 14, 1946, p. 330.

[3] See *The Tablet* (London), Sept. 4, 1954, p. 235.

> "The Church likewise makes a stand regarding the movement at Caux called Moral Re-Armament. She is of the opinion that the principles on which this movement is based are simply a vague and dangerous religious syncretism which completely conditions moral influence. The Church therefore takes every opportunity to counsel the faithful, and priests above all, not to take any part in this movement."[4]

In 1951, the Holy Office sent the following instruction to the Bishops throughout the world:

> The Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office has been asked whether it is fitting that the clergy and members of religious communities should take part in the reunions and meetings of Moral Re-armament.
>
> Their Eminences the Cardinals and the priests of this Sacred Congregation, in a plenary session on August 8, 1951, attentively examined the proposed question and decided to issue the following directives:
>
> 1. It is not fitting for either diocesan or religious priests, and much less for nuns, to participate in the meetings of Moral Re-armament.
>
> 2. If exceptional circumstances should make such participation opportune, the permission of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office must be requested beforehand. This permission will be granted only to learned and experienced priests.
>
> 3. Finally it is not fitting that the faithful should accept posts of responsibility in Moral Re-armament, and especially not fitting that they join the so-called "policy team."[5]

In 1952, His Eminence Cardinal Schuster, the late Archbishop of Milan, made this statement:

> This movement, Protestant in origin and structure . . . is dangerous . . . because it offers a kind of

[4] *Rheinische Post,* May 31, 1950, as quoted and translated in Suenens, *op. cit.,* p. 81.

[5] Noa, *op. cit.,* pp. 81-82.

> diminished and subjective religion . . . an arbitrary and therefore highly erroneous religiosity. What is found at Caux is a subjective pietism which bears the unmistakeable stamp of Protestantism.[6]

During the same month, August, 1952, the following statement was made by His Eminence Cardinal Van Roey, Archbishop of Malines, in the name of the Belgian Hierarchy:

> The episcopate of Belgium bids the faithful beware of any participation of whatever nature in the activities of "Moral Re-Armament" which has its European centre at Caux; this is because the movement contains concealed dangers to the integrity of the Catholic Faith.[7]

Monsignor Brown, Bishop of Galway, had this to say about the *Group*:

> To recapitulate our review, we think it certain that the Oxford Group forms a heretical sect. . . . It follows that no Catholic can become a member without rejecting the teaching of the Church. To become a member of the movement and to accept all its opinions would for a Catholic be the equivalent of apostasy.[8]

Bishop Suenens quotes a statement of an American Bishop given in October, 1952:

> We consider the MRA as a non-Catholic sect in process of formation, and we regard as a dangerous symptom the attitude of certain Catholics involved in the movement.[9]

In the pastoral letter of Monsignor Leonard, Bishop of Madurai, India, the following pronouncement was made:

> You must know that this is a movement Protestant in origin and bearing the stamp of Protestantism. Although it works frankly for the betterment

[6] Suenens, *op. cit.*, pp.81-82.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 82.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

> of morals, the movement embodies important errors from the very fact that it separates morality from its firm foundations, namely revealed truth, as well as from the necessary principle of authority; also from the fact that it reduces religion to a religious subjectivity, independent of all dogma and of all profession of faith, thus opening the door to religious indifferentism. No Catholic may take part in the movement.[10]

Because of the beneficial results of MRA activities in certain phases of endeavor, the Cardinals and Archbishops of France have permitted a restricted participation under certain conditions:

> The assembly of the Cardinals and Archbishops of France has issued a statement on the "Moral Re-Armament" movement.... Recalling an earlier statement of November 27, 1947, and endorsing the recent judgements of the Swiss Bishop of Fribourg,... make two recommendations to the Bishops of France:—
>
> 1. No Catholics should attend meetings of Moral Re-Armament except those who are well instructed in their religion and have first taken advice from a priest who is sufficiently informed of the conditions that are necessary if a Catholic is to participate without harm.
>
> 2. Priests and religious, and, a fortiori, seminarists, will not attend Moral Re-Armament without having obtained the authorization of their Bishops or their religious Superiors. They will in any event take care not to let it be thought that their presence at the meetings of Moral Re-Armament implies any approval of the movement in principle on the part of the Hierarchy![11]

In the United States the center of *Moral Re-Armament* is at Mackinac Island in the diocese of Marquette, Michigan. Bishop Thomas L. Noa issued the following statement on MRA in August, 1958:

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[11] *The Tablet* (London), August 14, 1948, p. 108.

The Vatican City daily, the L'Osservatore Romano, is considered to be the semi-official organ of the Holy See. The latest authoritative Catholic opinion about MRA was voiced in this organ on December 9, 1957. The writer of the editorial does not question the intentions of the persons of sincere and good faith who are a part of the movement. However, the editorial maintains that MRA is a religious movement with a religious ideology of a nature different from that of Catholics.

Catholics are reminded in this editorial that the directives of the Holy Office on MRA remain in force for the entire world. In view of the dangers to the purity and the integrity of faith, the writer adds: "It is therefore not surprising if some authoritative members of the Catholic hierarchy have forbidden the faithful of their jurisdiction to take part in Moral Re-Armament."

In this Pastoral we have presented an instruction about the teaching authority of the Church on faith and morals. We have pointed out the dangers encountered by Catholics in MRA to the purity and integrity of their faith.

Until Holy Mother Church should declare that no danger to the faith for Catholics is to be found in the movement, the present Pastoral Instruction concludes with the following directive: Catholics of the Diocese of Marquette and all other Catholics whenever they may be within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Marquette may not attend the meetings of MRA, or participate in or promote its activities.[12]

Statements of Moral Theologians:

The Rev. John Ford, S.J., and the Rev. Gerald Kelly, S.J.:

Whatever be the theoretical assertions of the Buchmanites that the Movement is not a religion, in actual fact it is not only a religious movement but is distinctively Protestant in its background and in its attitude towards basic religious questions. Christ for them is the Protestant Christ who does

[12] Noa, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

> not live in an authoritative Church and in the Eucharist. The Church includes all denominations, and the Bible is interpreted independently of the Church. Obviously, a movement like this has dangerous consequences: religious indifferentism; quietism, because of insistence on individual guidance through the whisperings of the Holy Spirit; and a form of existentialism, since moral problems are solved according to interior individual guidance and not according to objective and unchanging principles.[13]

The Rev. J. McCarthy:

> . . . its origin, aims, practices, doctrines and organization has shown that the Movement is nothing more or less than a heretical religious sect.[14]

The Rev. Aloysius McDonough, C.P.

> But we [Catholics] know better than to depend on individual vagaries, private judgement, emotional feeling, momentary caprice, and the like, as norms for guidance by the Holy Spirit.[15]

[13] The Rev. John C. Ford, S.J. and the Rev. Gerald Kelly, S.J., "Notes on Moral Theology, 1953" *Theological Studies* XV (1954), 78-79.

[14] John McCarthy, "Co-operation in the Oxford Group Movement," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record,* LVI (1940), 371-372.

[15] Aloysius McDonough, C.P., "What is to Be Thought of MRA?" *Sign* XXX (Aug. 1950-July 1951), 36.

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